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AUG. 1, 2005

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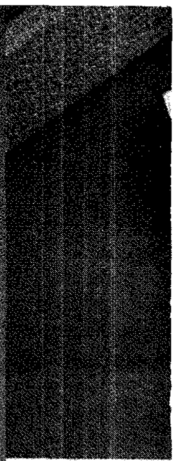

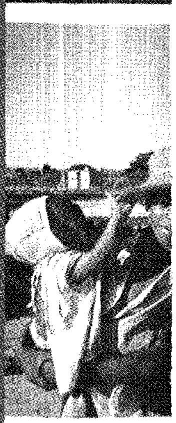

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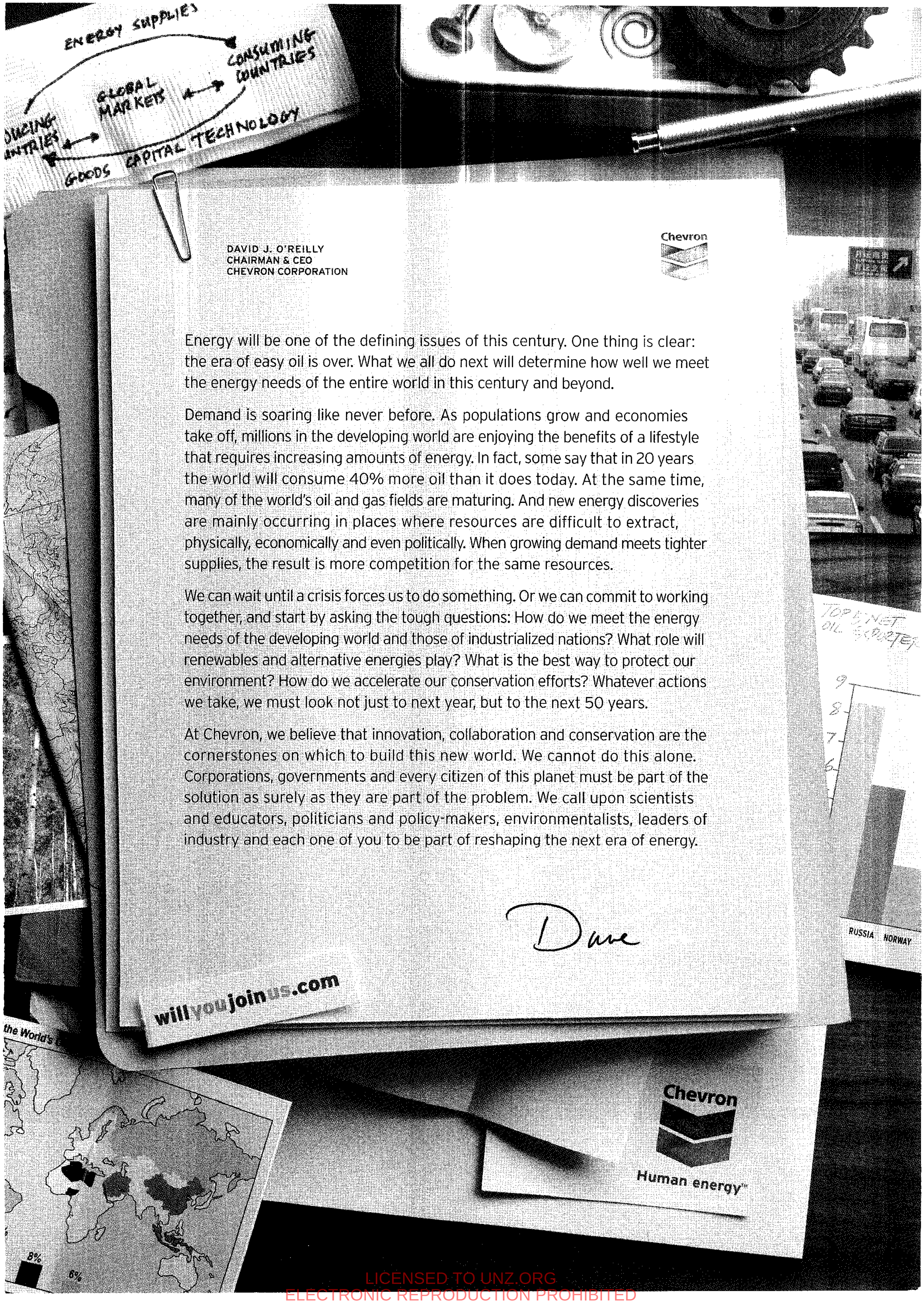
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Dave

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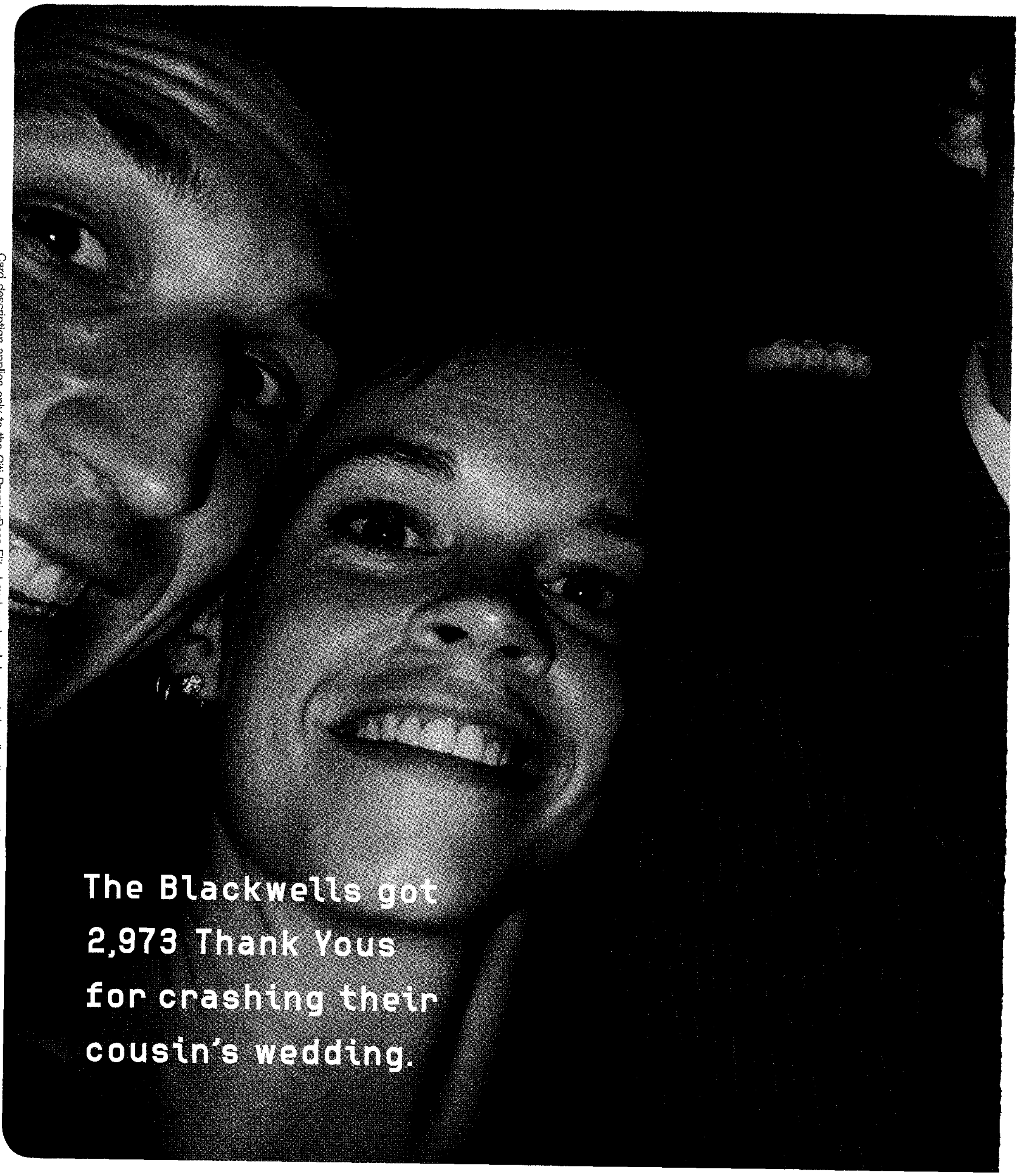
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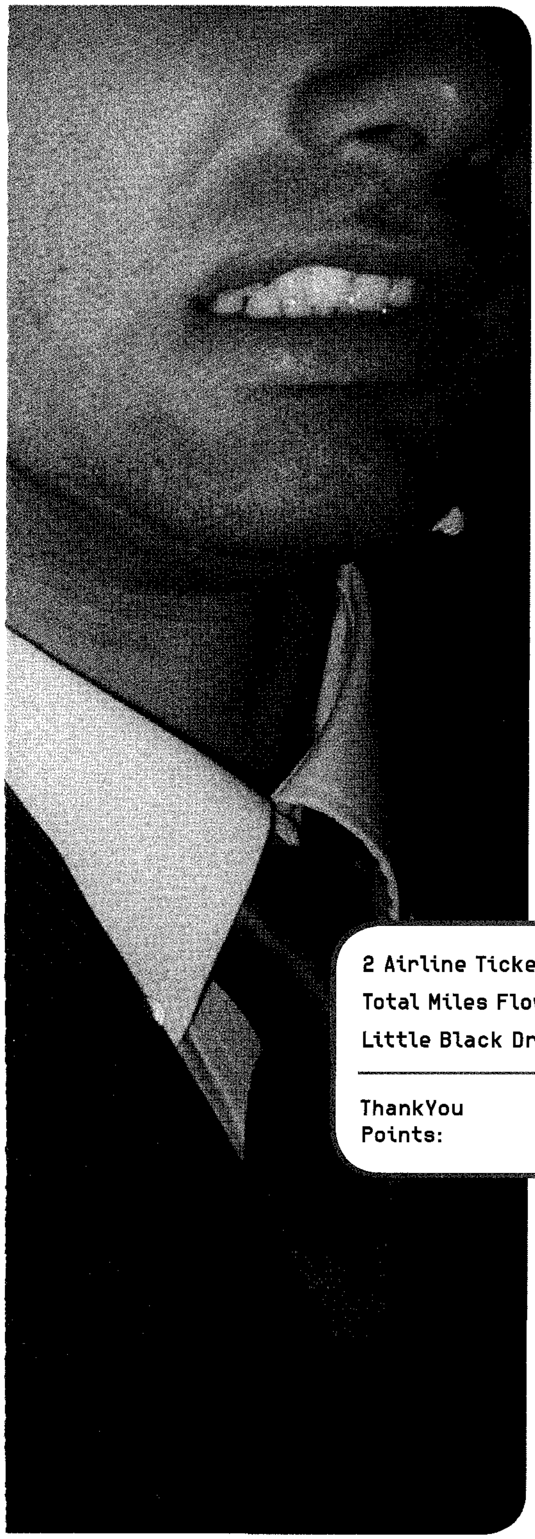

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Every car company is concerned about the people inside its cars.

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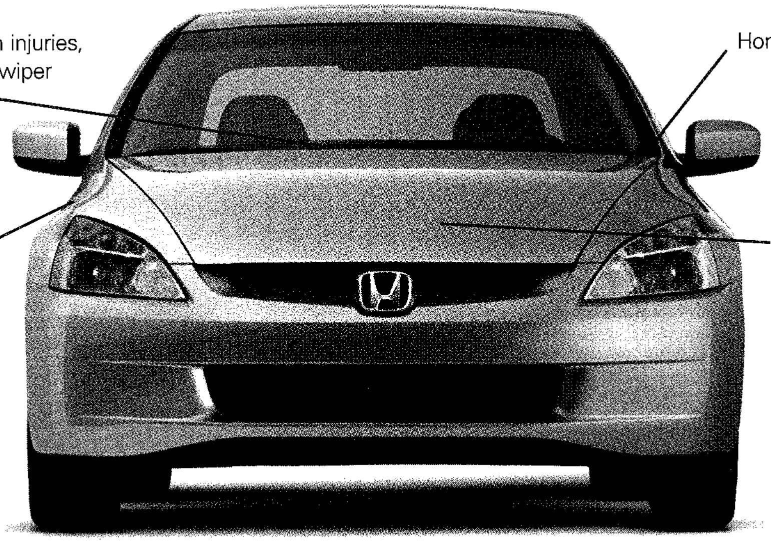

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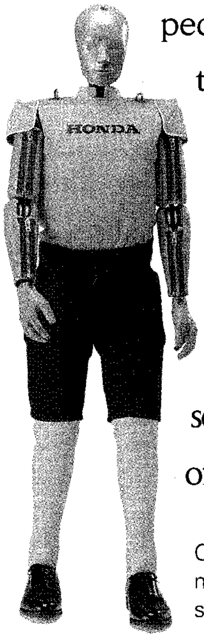
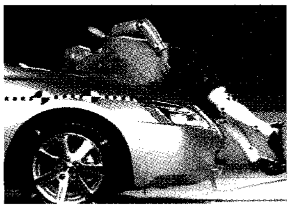


Created by Honda engineers, POLAR II is the most advanced pedestrian test dummy, and simulates the kinematics of the human body.



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safety.honda.com

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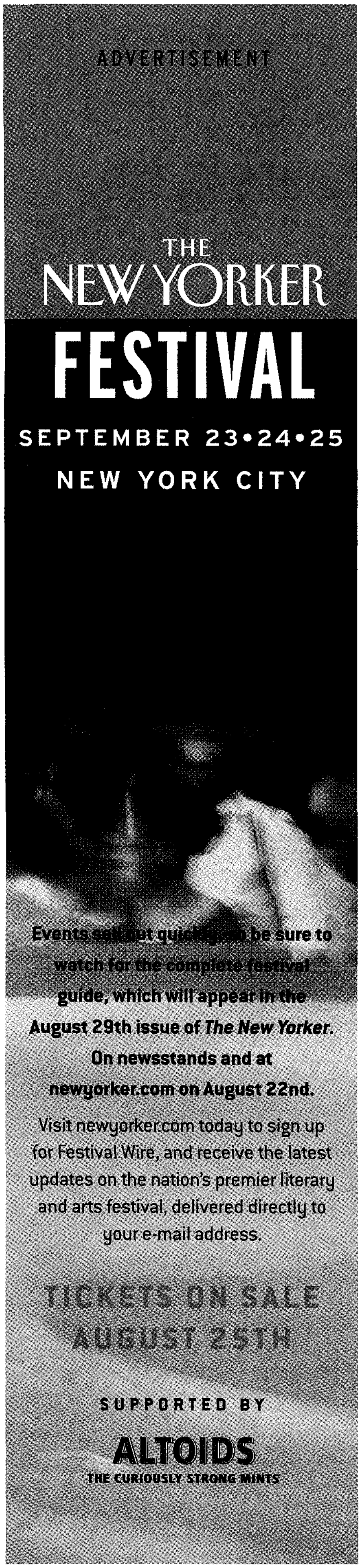
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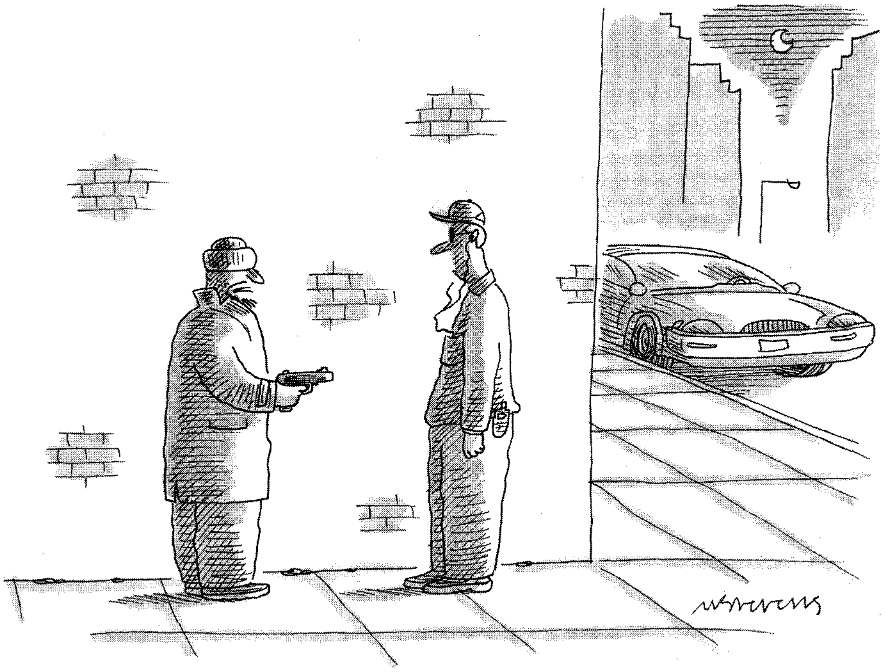
Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 86) is the magazine's television critic. ♦



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MONITORING METH

Michael Specter's picture of the ravages of crystal-methamphetamine addiction among gays is frightening and realistic ("Higher Risk," May 23rd). However, we are concerned that widespread alarm about crystal meth may divert attention from what must remain the chief focus of H.I.V. prevention—safe sex. Our recent online survey of more than four thousand gay men from all over America found that sixty-four per cent of those who reported having anal sex without a condom in their last encounter with a new or casual partner did not use drugs. Drug use is a serious problem, but if it stopped tomorrow sexual transmission of H.I.V. would continue. Interventions that target high-risk sex are urgently needed.

Mary Ann Chiasson and Sabina Hirshfield
Medical and Health Research Associates of New York City
New York City

Specter writes of searching Craigslist.com to get a sense of the number of gay men looking to have sex while using crystal meth. Typing in "PNP" ("party and play"), he found seven hundred and seventy-one entries "just for that day." However, such searches retrieve matching ads in reverse chronological order, most of them posted on previous days. As I write, a search retrieves seven hundred and eighty-six entries, but only twenty-eight were posted today. Also, any posting including the phrase "no PNP" would have been retrieved, too, further whittling down the fantastic number. These days, it is common for men to state that they are not interested in sex with drugs.

Graham Coppin
New York City

PRISONER'S DILEMMA

As a Democrat who could nonetheless have happily voted for John McCain had he won the Republican nomination in 2000, I was shocked by Connie Bruck's Profile ("McCain's Party," May 30th). Once fearless in his criticism of Administration policies, McCain, with an eye to the 2008 nomination, is now generally eager to do the President's bidding. McCain's change of position on torture is particularly disappointing, given his own experiences in Vietnam. He previously opposed it on the ground of its uselessness (eventually, the victim will say anything, just as McCain did when he signed a confession in Vietnam). Now, however, McCain countenances torture on the basis that "you have to do something," useless or not. It is disillusioning to see this brave man's transformation into a run-of-the-mill political mercenary.

Henry F. Luepke
St. Louis, Mo.

HALF BAKED

Hendrik Hertzberg teases out many absurdities in the recent Supreme Court decision on medical marijuana (Comment, June 27th). He cites Justice Stevens's stated hope that action in Congress may one day enable a more humane law to prevail, but majoritarian institutions like Congress may be ill-fitted to protect vulnerable minorities such as the users of medical marijuana. The Bill of Rights, drawn up by the Framers, reflects this, and if only it included a right to health the federal law criminalizing medical marijuana would be unconstitutional. The Framers' omission, however, has been rectified in a key document of the International Bill of Rights. Had we joined the rest of the civilized world in ratifying, as opposed to merely signing, it, the liberals on the Court could have done the right thing, while the conservatives could have reached the same conclusion by the alternative route of states' rights.

Barbara Stark
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Hempstead, N.Y.

•

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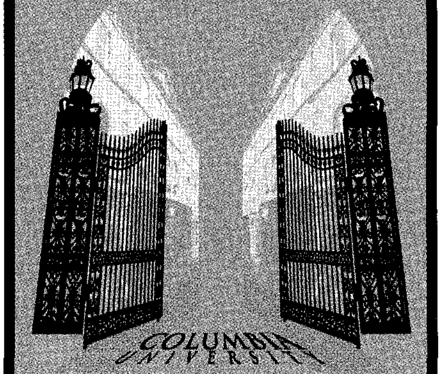
Einstein did his greatest thinking while walking on the beach.



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A post-performance talk by dancers at Jacob's Pillow. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
31	1	2	27	28	29	30

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
A FORCE OF ONE

Sybil has got nothing on Charles Ross, who plays Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Darth Vader, Han Solo, Chewbacca, and the rest of the inhabitants of that galaxy far, far away in his mind-boggling "One-Man Star Wars Trilogy," now at the Lamb's Theatre. (See page 11.)

NIGHT LIFE
TEXAS TWO-STEP

The Austin-based producer, accordionist, and keyboardist Michael Ramos has been busy backing Patty Griffin, John Mellencamp, and Paul Simon, but he had time left over to create Charanga Cakewalk, which mixes the music of his Latin heritage (his family is from Mexico) with contemporary dance rhythms. The group comes to Joe's Pub this week. (See page 12.)

ART
ELINOR CARUCCI

Carucci's new photographic self-portraits, taken with the help of her husband, are intimate, but also public—they document her work, at restaurants and parties, as a Middle Eastern dancer. (See page 16.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MOSTLY MOZART

Louis Langrée leads the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in the monthlong festival's first program, which highlights Mozart's ties to London. The soprano Renée Fleming and the pianist Stephen Hough are special guests. (See page 19.)

MOVIES
KING B

Though the film director Edgar G. Ulmer designed sets for Max Reinhardt's theatre and apprenticed with F. W. Murnau, he was best known for his nightmarish 1945 road-trip movie, "Detour," a low-grade noir that he shot in six days. A tribute to Ulmer at Anthology Film Archives will include that film plus such horror and sci-fi classics as "The Black Cat" and "The Man from Planet X." (See page 22.)

READINGS AND TALKS
HA JIN

The Chinese-born novelist reads from his latest work, "War Trash," which investigates the moral ambiguities of the Korean War. (See page 23.)

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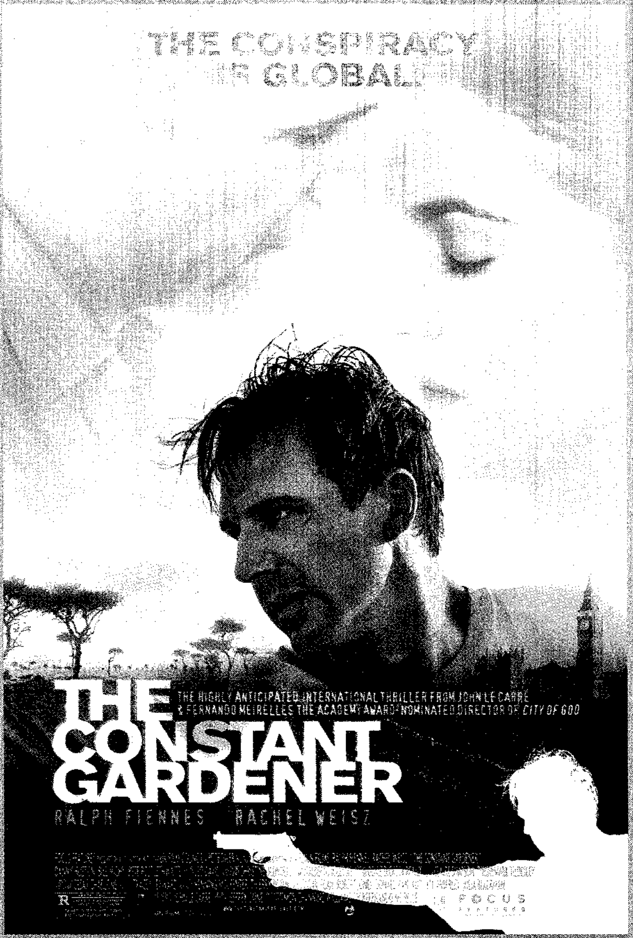
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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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THE DEAR BOY
The Second Stage Theatre Uptown series continues with a new play by Dan O'Brien, about an English teacher who is about to retire and two of his pupils. Directed by Michael John Garcés ("The Cook"). Previews begin Aug. 1. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

DEDICATION OR THE STUFF OF DREAMS
Nathan Lane, Alison Fraser, and Marian Seldes star in a new play by Terrence McNally, about an idealistic couple who yearn to buy a theatre in upstate New York. A Primary Stages production. Michael Morris directs. In previews. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

LENNON
A musical portrait of the life and songs of John Lennon has a cast that features multiple Lennons, including Will Chase and Terrence Mann; Julie Danao-Salkin plays Yoko Ono. Written and directed by Don Scardino. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

MODERN NOH PLAYS
The plays "Sotoba Komachi" ("Komachi at the Shrine") and "Yoroboshi" ("The Blind Young Man"), by the Nobel laureate Yukio Mishima, come to the Lincoln Center Festival, in a production directed by Yukio Ninagawa. July 28-30 at 8. For full festival schedule, visit www.lincolncenter.org. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

MY LIFE AS A FAIRY TALE
Fiona Shaw stars in a music-theatre piece about the life and letters of Hans Christian Andersen, conceived and directed by Shi-Zheng Chen, with music and lyrics by Stephin Merritt and text by Erik Ehn. Part of the Lincoln Center Festival. July 27-30 at 8. (John Jay Theatre, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 212-721-6500.)

OEDIPUS AT PALM SPRINGS
Leigh Silverman directs the Five Lesbian Brothers in their first new production in eight years—a sendup of Greek tragedies. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

ONE-MAN STAR WARS TRILOGY
The complete "Star Wars," "The Empire Strikes Back," and "The Return of the Jedi" are presented in an hour by Charles Ross in his sui-generis show, directed by TJ Dawe. Previews begin Aug. 2. (Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

THE AMERICAN LIVING ROOM
The multidisciplinary festival at HERE Arts Center includes dozens of new works of theatre, dance, video, and less classifiable genres. (145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 21.)

THE BLONDE IN THE THUNDERBIRD
In the most unabashedly narcissistic one-woman event in recent memory, Suzanne Somers, best known for playing Chrissy, the wacky blonde on the seventies TV show "Three's Company," talks about her sensitivity, her insecurities, and her triumphs. Flanked by two video screens that capture her every move, she recounts her assorted struggles: low self-esteem, an abusive, alcoholic father, siblings with addictions, a kid she didn't at first want, and so on. Mixed in with the patter are a number of songs, all of which sound the same; throughout, Somers shows the emotional depth and technical finesse of a cartoon character. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE CONSTANT WIFE
A splendid revival by the Roundabout Theatre Company of W. Somerset Maugham's 1926 drawing-room comedy. Lynn Redgrave shines as the right and very honorable Mrs. Culver, a woman who is not afraid to speak her mind and who does so with élan. Kate Burton plays her daughter Constance, whose doctor husband of fifteen years (Michael Cumpsty) is having an affair with Marie-Louise (Kathryn Meisle)—Constance's best friend. "The Constant Wife" is Oscar Wilde lite, but no matter. Everything about this production is such a pleasure—from Allen Moyer's set design and Michael Krass's costumes to Mark Brokaw's impeccable direction—that the hackneyed plot and loopy logic barely register. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/27/05.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. Through Aug. 14.)

LE DERNIER CARAVANSÉRAIL (ODYSSÉES)
Ariane Mnouchkine's epic recounting of the real stories of modern-day refugees searching for a sense of home. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lincoln Center Festival, Damrosch Park. 212-721-6500. Through July 31.)

DRUMSTRUCK
Catharsis comes in many forms, but on a hot summer evening there's nothing quite like banging on a *djembe*, keeping time with an ensemble of master African drummers and dancers. In this show from Johannesburg, each audience member is provided with a two-foot-tall drum, which the spirited performers demonstrate how to use to exhilarating effect. Highlights of this evening of traditional rhythms and music include a percussive dance from the Gauteng gold mines and the song "Jikele Maweni," a full-throated ballad made famous by Miriam Makeba. David Warren directs. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

EAST TO EDINBURGH
In the second year of the festival at 59E59, fifteen new American plays get a trial run before they appear in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe later this summer. For full schedule, visit www.59e59.org. (59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through July 31.)

FATAL ATTRACTION: A GREEK TRAGEDY
A hammy retelling of the 1987 film, complete with bad perms, a boiled bunny who rises from the grave for a dance break, and a portentous Greek chorus. Corey Feldman makes his stage début in the Michael Douglas role, while Alana McNair and Kate Wilkinson, who adapted the show from the original, stand in for Glenn Close and Anne Archer. Much of the comedy hinges on the debatable view that the movie demonizes businesswomen, and at times the satire wears thin. But Feldman carries the show with his gruff, spirited impersonation. Timothy Haskell ("I Love Paris") directs. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

ICE FACTORY '05
The Soho Think Tank's festival of new work continues with "Psyche," a musical about a woman born at the turn of the nineteenth century who lived her life as a man. Written by Deborah Wallace and directed by Leon Ingulsrud. Music by Andy Gilis. July 27-30 at 7. For festival schedule, visit www.sohothinktank.org. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 13.)

MIDTOWN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL
The summer series presents more than fifty shows, at five venues, including a musical about Gen-X apathy, a comedy about a moth infestation, and a drama about artists in Hell's Kitchen. For full festival schedule, visit www.midtownfestival.org. (212-868-4444. Through Aug. 7.)

PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!
At the Irish Repertory Theatre, an excellent cast revives Brian Friel's bittersweet 1964 play about Gar O'Donnell, a young Irishman who resolves to leave his home town of Ballybeg—a place where time changes nothing, particularly the ties between father and son—and travel to Philadelphia. As he deliberates parting from the lads he knocked around with and the girl he loved, he splits into two characters: the clever, cynical Private Gar (superbly played by James Kennedy) and his boyish alter ego, Public Gar (Michael FitzGerald). A nuanced production, sensitively directed by Ciarán O'Reilly. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

PRIMO
Antony Sher plays the Italian chemist and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi in the New York run of

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
DIRTY DEEDS

The singer and guitarist Mick Collins has been a significant force in Detroit garage rock for twenty years, the last ten of which he has spent fronting his current band, the Dirtbombs. Garage rock is an almost exclusively white subculture of sixties-obsessed record collectors, and Collins, who is black, is expert at finding subtle and satisfying ways of exploring that implicit racial tension. The Dirtbombs' 2001 album, "Ultraglide in Black," was a collection of cover songs by black artists, and the band's new collection of singles and rarities, "If You Don't Already Have a Look," includes an entire disk of covers that illustrate Collins's gift for suggesting that rock and roll is one eternal, enjoyable tug-of-war between black and white gestures. The band turns Stevie Wonder's sinuous "Maybe Your Baby" into a hammering punk anthem, but Collins's singing stays true to Wonder's soul reading. The Dirtbombs, who play the Knitting Factory this week, sound like the end result of a twenty-year refinement of grimy, rhythm-heavy guitar rock, the living embodiment of The Who's original motto, "Maximum R. & B."

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

TONKAWA
33
BUCS

MICHAEL WEIDON

London's National Theatre production of this biographical drama, which is based on Levi's experiences at Auschwitz. Of the London show, our critic John Lahr wrote: "Levi is a witness to the Holocaust, and, as Antony Sher expertly plays him, his presence has a quiet, commanding urgency." (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Through Aug. 7.)

SUMMER PLAY FESTIVAL
Now in its second year, this festival showcases new work by sixteen playwrights from the United States and the United Kingdom. For full schedule, visit www.spfnyc.com. (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through July 31.)

SWEET SONGS OF THE SOUL
An autobiographical play with music, performed by the singer Melba Moore and directed by Rhonda Passion Hansome. (Harry de Jur Playhouse, 466 Grand St. 212-279-4200.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
From its opening moments, in which Feste (Louis Butelli) makes a comic bit out of an attempt to hang himself, this thoughtful but uneven production by the Aquila Theatre Company finds dark colors in the popular Shakespeare comedy. Feste becomes a Prospero-like stand-in for the playwright, doubling as the captain who rescues Viola, setting the plot in motion. The girlish Lindsay Rae Taylor, as Viola, and the commanding Lisa Carter, as Olivia, bring a fresh dynamic to their scenes, and Kenn Sabberton as Malvolio looks amusingly constipated, but other parts of the play lag. Directed by Peter Meineck and Robert Richmond. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave., between 24th and 25th Sts. 212-279-4200.)

OUT OF TOWN

BAY STREET THEATRE
Tony Roberts and Derek Cecil star in a revival of Anthony Shaffer's "Sleuth" in the Hamptons, in a production directed by Will Frears. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500. Through July 31.)

GOODSPEED MUSICALS
In 1954, Julie Andrews made her Broadway début in Sandy Wilson's spoof of nineteen-twenties musical comedies, "The Boy Friend"—playing a giddy English heiress who falls for a delivery boy. She now directs a revival of the play in Connecticut, which goes on national tour in the fall. (Goodspeed Opera House, East Haddam, Conn. 860-873-8668.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
"The Tempest" and "Two Gentlemen of Verona" play in rotating repertory on the tented outdoor stage at the Boscobel Restoration. (Cold Spring, N.Y. For more information, visit hvshakespeare.org. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
Caryl Churchill's seminal play "Top Girls," about five noteworthy women and the sacrifices they made, runs through July 31 at the Massachusetts summer series. Jo Bonney directs. For full festival schedule, visit www.wtfestival.org. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

ALL SHOOK UP: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ALTAR BOYZ:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEAST ON THE MOON:** Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **BORDER/CLASH:** The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FOOLS IN LOVE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **LAZER VAUDEVILLE:** Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MANUSCRIPT:** Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE PARIS LETTER:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. (Through Aug. 7.) **THE PILLOWMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE SKIN GAME:** Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231. **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes July 31.) **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TALK OF THE TOWN:** Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 212-840-6800. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200. **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

The protopunk band DKT/MC5, at SummerStage and Northsix.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—July 30: The local group **Las Rubias del Norte** rearranges Latin big-band music for a handful of instruments, including the glockenspiel. The group may be small, but their sound and passion are anything but. They're joined here by **Las Ondas Marteles**, a French trio that's devoted to the memory of Miguel Angel Ruiz, a Cuban poet and sculptor who died in 2000. The group's latest album, "Y Despues de Todo," is a collection of elegiac bolero pieces that set Ruiz's writing to music.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—July 28: **Whitesnake** have long been belittled as pretenders to Led Zeppelin's throne, but the hard-rock ensemble, led by the former Deep Purple front man David Coverdale (who Robert Plant once called David Coverversion), cashed in big during the late eighties, thanks to a clutch of tawdry videos on MTV. The current incarnation of the band, however, emphasizes Coverdale's rhythm-and-blues roots instead of that slightly embarrassing earlier chapter. Aug. 1-2: The distinctive harmonies of the celebrated folk rockers **Crosby, Stills & Nash** will forever be linked with the youthful idealism that marked the late sixties and early seventies.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—July 29: The theatrical heavy-metal shtick of **Satanicide.** July 30-31: The **Brian Jonestown Massacre** traffics in intense psychedelic soundscapes.

CASTLE GARDEN FESTIVAL
Before Ellis Island became the gateway to the nation, arriving immigrants filed through Castle Garden, a former fort at the foot of Manhattan. A hundred and fifty years after it opened, this gathering celebrates the mostly forgotten legacy of the site, which is now known as Castle Clinton (and is probably better remembered as a theatre where Jenny Lind performed, in 1850, and as the site of the New York Aquarium, from 1896 to 1941). The **Spanish Harlem Orchestra, Simon Shaheen's Qantara, Susan McKeown,** and others will perform. (Battery Park. July 31. For more information, call 212-344-3491 or visit www.thebattery.org.)

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—July 31: A daylong festival of music from Africa, with **Papa Wemba, Gokh-Bi System, Maria De Barros, Kakande, Nkossi Knonda,** and others.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—July 30 at 3: The **DKT/MC5** (see Northsix) share the stage with their fellow-visionaries the **Sun Ra Arkestra**, whose celestial tune "Starship" they famously covered on their début album, "Kick Out the Jams." July 31 at 3: The singer **Lila Downs,** known for her work on the soundtrack to the film "Frida," is joined by the Spanish vocalist **Maria del Mar Bonet** and **Las Ondas Marteles** (see Barbès).

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Aug. 2: **Static X** is a futuristic heavy-metal band led by Wayne Static, whose Cookie Monster voice and Don King hair make the violently juvenile music slightly ridiculous.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—July 28: The multi-instrumentalist Michael Ramos spearheads **Charanga Cakewalk.** The band's début effort, "Loteria de la Cumbia Lounge," blends traditional brass and percussion rhythms with contemporary dance grooves. Aug. 1-2: The former college-rock queen **Liz Phair** settles in for a pair of acoustic shows.

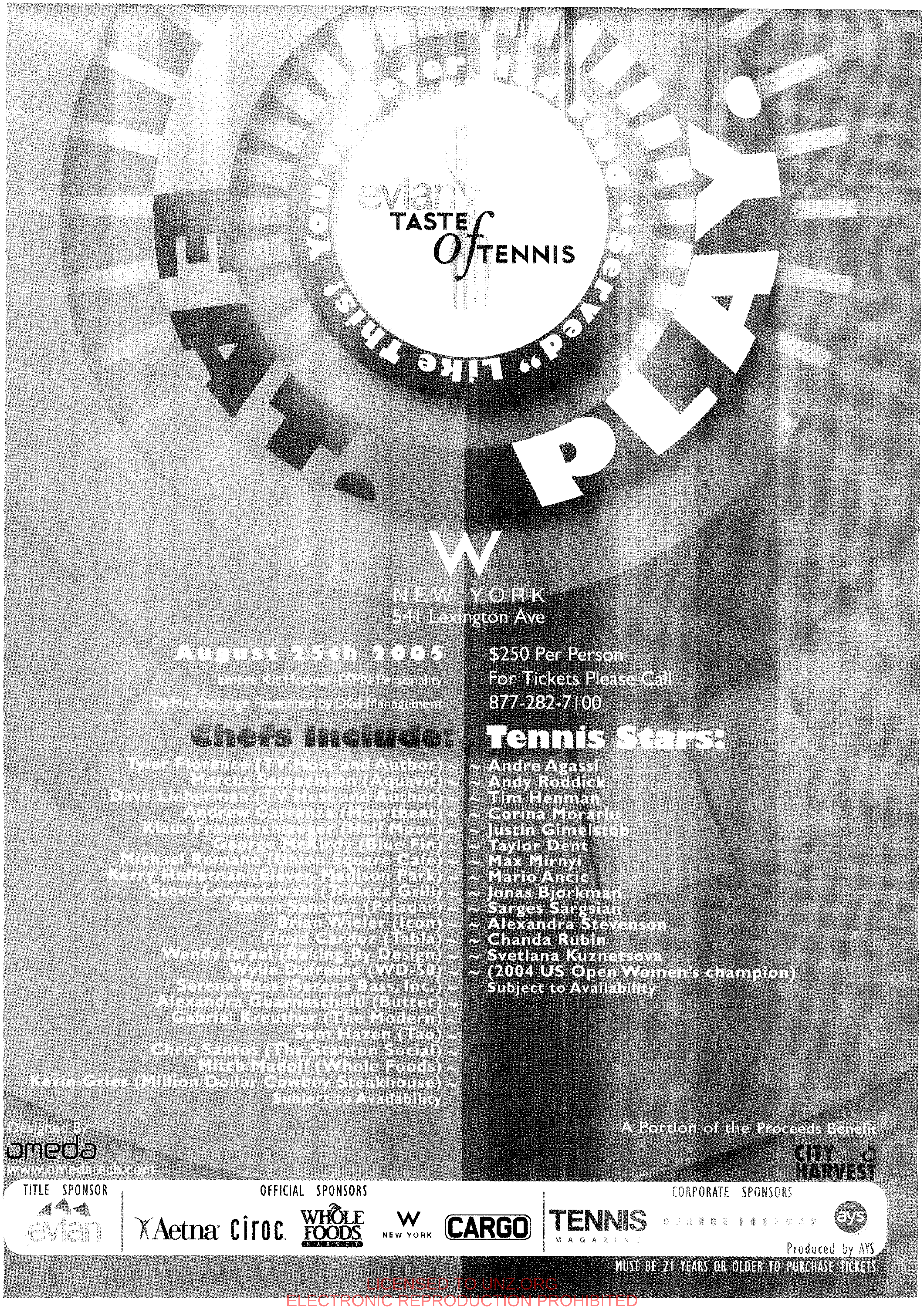
JONES BEACH
Wantagh, N.Y. (212-307-7171)—July 31: **Duran Duran.** Some twenty years ago, this stylish British outfit applied a funk sheen to the New Wave sound and inspired a brand of slavish teen-age hysteria not seen since the height of Beatlemania. "Astronaut," their much hyped comeback album, which was released last year, hasn't sold anywhere near as well as, say, "Rio," from 1982, but the band refuses to live purely in the past—its sets are peppered with new material.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—July 29: The **Dirtbombs,** the hard-driving outfit from Detroit that keeps challenging the meaning of rock and roll. Aug. 2: The Black Rock Coalition's summer film-and-music festival gets under way with a screening of "Afro-Punk" and performances by **Honeychild** and **Pillow Theory.** Through Aug. 30.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—July 28: The **Dirtbombs** (see the Knitting Factory). July 30: The guitar-toting minstrel Sam Jayne appears with his group **Love as Laughter.** The band's latest record, "Laughter's Fifth," was recorded in a friend's house, and it has a loose, homemade feel that's quite comforting. July 31: **Thor,** the Jack LaLanne of glam rock. His real name is Jon Mikl, and he's a former bodybuilding champion (Mr. Canada, Mr. U.S.A.) who's been hawking a rock-warrior shtick since the seventies. He's impossible to take seriously, but his showmanship (which falls somewhere between that of a low-rent Kiss and professional wrestling) is always endearing.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—July 29: The three surviving members of

YUKO SHIMIZU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MUST BE 21 YEARS OR OLDER TO PURCHASE TICKETS

Detroit's revolutionary protopunk band the MC5—the bassist Michael Davis, the guitarist Wayne Kramer, and the drummer Dennis (Machine Gun) Thompson—have reunited as **DKT/MC5**. Here, they're playing their seminal live (and at one time banned) 1969 album, "Kick Out the Jams." Besides being left-wing radicals (they comprised the "entertainment wing" of the White Panther Party), the MC5 were musical pioneers who helped forge punk and metal archetypes with fast and heavy riff-based anthems and experimented with free-jazz-influenced improvisation. Many special guests, including members of the Dictators, Mudhoney, and Guns N' Roses, are set to join the original members.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—July 29: The local band **La Cumbiamba eNeYé** plays a mix of traditional Colombian fare—from lively *cumbia* to brassy, big-band *porro* to percussion-based *currulao*. July 27: **Stacey Earle,** the younger sister of the alt-country-rocker Steve, and her husband and duo partner **Mark Stuart,** a veteran of Freddy Fender's and Steve Earle's bands.

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—The young transgendered lead singer of **Antony & the Johnsons** is a fixture of the downtown cabaret scene; he moves uptown for the night of July 28. The performer's latest album, "I Am a Bird Now," is a gorgeous meditation on loneliness, aging, and the boundaries of gender. It includes duets with Boy George and Rufus Wainwright and guitar work by Lou Reed.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Aug. 2: The Welsh troubadour **David Gray,** one of the kings of adult alternative pop, has a boyishly photogenic look and a taste for up-to-date rhythms.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—July 27-30: The **Ravi Coltrane** quartet. On his most recent album, "In Flux," the saxophonist continues his quest to find his own voice while acknowledging his father's mighty legacy.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—July 28-31: **Charlie Haden's** recent collection of Mexican ballads, "Land of the Sun," may not have the kick of the bassist's best work, but in performance such exemplary soloists as the saxophonists **Miguel Zenon** and **Tony Malaby** will bring additional zest to the music.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—The pianist **Arturo O'Farrill,** the maestro of the Lincoln Center Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra, stops by July 26-31 with a compact combo featuring the cross-cultural blend of the trumpeter **Tom Harrell,** the guitarist **Ximo Tebar,** and the drummer **Dafnis Prieto,** among others.

"JAZZ IN JULY"
The feisty ensembles of the pianist Horace Silver and the trumpeter Kenny Dorham were models of the hard-bop genre. On July 27, the pianists **Bill Charlap, David Hazeltine,** and **Mike LeDonne,** along with the trumpeters **Jim Rotondi** and **Joe Magnarelli,** pay homage to these paradigmatic, if too often under-recognized, figures. July 28: The vocalist **Freddy Cole** closes the festival with a tribute to his brother Nat. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—July 28-31: Contemporary hard bop at its most authentic, with the pianist **Larry Willis,** who is joined by the saxophonist **Gary Bartz,** the bassist **Buster Williams,** the drummer **Al Foster,** and the trombonist **Steve Davis.**

"THE SPIRIT OF DJANGO REINHARDT"
The great Gypsy guitarist gets serenaded by European acolytes including **Florin Niculescu, Joscho Stephan,** and **Angelo Debarre.** The all-American Cuban émigré **Paquito D'Rivera** assists on woodwinds. (Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. July 27.)

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—July 29-30: The **Sonny Fortune** quartet. A few decades have passed since Fortune was on the bandstand with McCoy Tyner and Miles Davis, but this still energetic saxophonist stirs up plenty of trouble with his Coltrane-style playing.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—July 26-31: The **Fred Hersch** trio. Hersch has an ambitious streak (earlier this year his large ensemble adapted Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass"), but the marvellous pianist and composer expresses himself best in a small-group setting. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Matisse: The Fabric of Dreams, His Art and His Textiles,"** a revelatory, achingly beautiful show, pairs items from the artist's personal fabric collection with paintings and graphic works in which they played crucial roles. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860."** Through Aug. 21. ♦ Two recent installations are on view in **"Tony Oursler at the Met: 'Studio' and 'Climaxed.'"** The first contemplates the influences at work on the artist through an assemblage of pieces by the likes of Jacqueline Humphries, Rem Koolhaas, and Kaare Rafoss. The second, more traditional Oursler work is a giant, lumpy potato head with flames and a blinky face projected on it, its mouth voicing demented and hilarious threats, boasts, and sorrows. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"Chanel,"** a retrospective of designs from the couture house. Through Aug. 7. ♦ **"John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker"** presents a few dozen pieces by a prominent Colonial American furniture-maker alongside work by his contemporaries. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A summer installation in the roof garden of five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Pioneering Modern Painting: Cézanne and Pissarro, 1865-1885"** chronicles the careers of two friends who gave each other a leg up into brave new styles and techniques, though it quickly becomes clear how much farther Cézanne, the younger artist by a decade, vaulted. Through Sept. 12. ♦ **"Friedlander,"** a major retrospective of the work of the photographer Lee Friedlander (born 1934). Through Aug. 29. ♦ As a member of the mid-seventies New Topographics crew, **Frank Gohlke** documented the man-made American landscape with the deadpan elegance of a product photographer (for some prime examples, see his current mini-retrospective at Greenberg). But beginning a year after the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens and continuing for the next decade, he recorded the utter devastation and gradual regeneration of a site that had been blasted back to prehistory. In the process, Gohlke turned into a latter-day Ansel Adams. Although his aerial views and panoramic vistas of what appear to be primordial mountainsides aren't conventionally picturesque, they do have a tough, undeniable magnificence and the presence of modern classics. Through Sept. 26. ♦ **"The High Line"** details Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort to Thirty-fourth Street. Through Oct. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Oteiza: Myth and Modernism."** The Basque sculptor Jorge Oteiza (1908-2003) followed in the high-modernist footsteps of Giacometti and Henry Moore. He triumphed at the 1957 São Paulo Biennial, winning the International Grand Prize for Sculpture and extending his influence to young Neoconcrete artists in Brazil, such as Lygia Clark. Committed to teaching and working on behalf of Basque culture, Oteiza stopped making art entirely in 1959, finally returning to unfinished projects in 1972 and eventually moving on to new ones. This small but expansive exhibition presents a thoughtful and inventive abstractionist, whose carved blocks of marble and folded planes of steel realize the aleatory, speculative geometries of his construction-paper collages. Through Aug. 24. ♦ **"Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition: Photographs and Mannerist Prints."** Through Aug. 24. ♦ **"Art of Tomorrow: Hilla Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim."** Through Aug. 10. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

DVD NOTES
FRENCH TWISTS

Two recent French films propose disturbing metaphysical responses to their characters' crises of solitude. In **"The Story of Marie and Julien"** (Koch Lorber Films), from 2003, Jacques Rivette—a principal New Wave filmmaker and a crucial early advocate of Hitchcock—uses austerely classical methods to turn a story of crime and erotic obsession into a web of otherworldly mystery. Julien Müller (Jerzy Radziwilowicz), a lonely clocksmith and occasional blackmailer, is sexually fixated on Marie (Emmanuelle Béart), a woman he met once at a party and who reënters his life under uncanny circumstances. The more deeply Julien is drawn to Marie, the more he doubts her motives and even her identity—yet his surmises don't come near the cosmic master plot in which the couple is trapped. Rivette's straightforward realism dissolves character, logic, and, finally, hope.

The contemporary Jewish Paris of Holocaust survivors and their descendants is the unexpectedly comic setting of Chantal Akerman's **"Tomorrow We Move"** (Kino on Video/Kimstim), from 2004. Charlotte Weinstein (Sylvie Testud), a thirtyish author with a nonexistent love life, has moved in with her mother (Aurore Clément) after her father's death. Unable to write her erotic novel at home, Charlotte—a double for Akerman, with her baggy pants, floppy hair, and constant cigarette—seeks inspiration in a café, where she meets the real-estate agent Samuel Popernick (Jean-Pierre Marielle), a soul-scarred Holocaust survivor and puckish philosopher whose offer of an apartment sets in motion antic yet life-changing complications for mother and daughter. The charmingly imperious Clément and the quietly frenetic young Testud are a perfectly matched pair—Roth by way of Ionesco—and Akerman, a poet of the infinitesimal, films them exquisitely. Her coy, symmetrical compositions balance the world as delicately as a scale. A turn of the head can redemptively tilt fate. Yet the forced gaiety of the resolution is like an exaggerated comic mask for a family and a world irreparably bereft—of one and of six million.

—*Richard Brody*

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Robert Smithson,"** a retrospective of drawings, constructions, and collages, includes filmed, photographed, and sketched documentation of the iconic "Spiral Jetty." Through Oct. 23. ♦ Work by eight artists, including Terry Winters, Ati Maier, and Matthew Ritchie, is on display in **"Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing."** Through Oct. 9. ♦ The eclectic gathering of works from the permanent collection in **"Landscape"** ranges from Jasper Johns's white maps to Ed Ruscha's rows of L.A. streets to Roni Horn's eerie comparison of the body and the earth, "Becoming a Landscape" (1999-2001). Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"Banks Violette: Untitled"** contemplates the romantic sublime with a model of a ruined church cast in salt, backed with music by the black-metal musician Snorre Ruch. Through Oct. 2. ♦ **"Prints Into Drawings,"** a roomful of prints that were made in the past fifty years, illustrates the shared techniques of drawing and printmaking. Through Aug. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries,"** a review of recent developments in the study of dinosaurs. Through Jan. 8, 2006. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Monet's London: Artists' Reflections on the Thames, 1859-1914"** includes Claude Monet's signature melting views of the Waterloo and Charing Cross Bridges, Whistler's "Thames Set" etchings (1859-60), and works by Winslow Homer, Childe Hassam, and André Derain, among others. Through Sept. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—On the museum's tenth anniversary, **"The Dahesh Collection: Celebrating a Decade of Discovery"** honors the academic tradition that ruled supreme before modernism. Through Sept. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"From Callot to Greuze: French Drawings from Weimar."** Through Aug. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Wild Things: The Art of Maurice Sendak."** Through Aug. 14. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Greater New York 2005,"** work by more than a hundred and sixty artists from around the city who have emerged in the past five years. Through Sept. 26. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

QUEEN SOFÍA SPANISH INSTITUTE
684 Park Ave., at 68th St. (212-628-0420)—In **"From Goya to Sorolla,"** a roomful of nineteenth-century paintings reads like a single thread pulled from the cloth of the European-salon tradition; a vitrine of small Goya drawings can be viewed as intimately as if they were in a private home. Large-scale paintings are gathered in a room upstairs, and a long gallery in the basement includes some early-twentieth-century works. Through July 30. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 6, Fridays, 10 to 8, and Saturdays, 11 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

ERLE LORAN
A five-minute walk from the Cézanne-Pissarro blockbuster at MOMA, a quiet echo of Cézanne's

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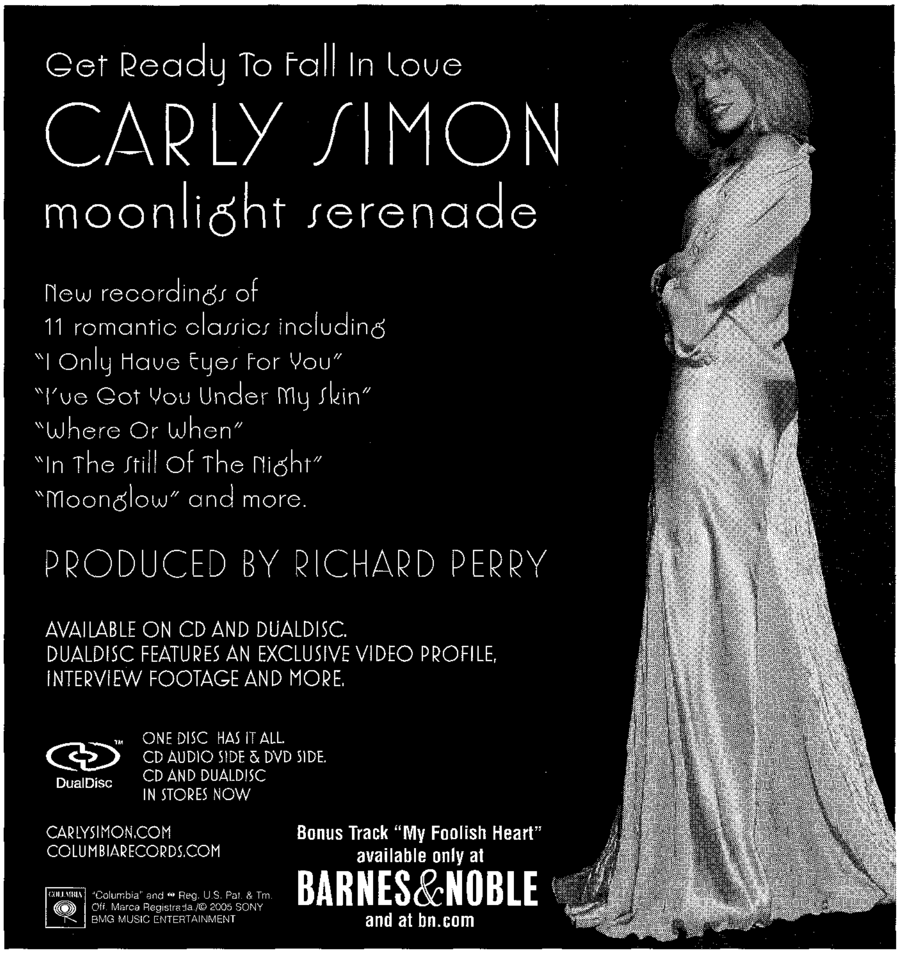
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influence can be heard in this small show at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art Research Center. As a student in 1926, Loran (1905-99) won a prize that allowed him to live in France for three years. He went to Cézanne's old studio in Aix-en-Provence and painted small, bright landscapes that reflect the tastes and style of his chosen mentor. He later focussed his energies on scholarship, writing a series of articles that would become "Cézanne's Composition" (Roy Lichtenstein appropriated two schematic diagrams from the book for his own work) and teaching at Berkeley for forty-five years. On view here are paintings and drawings, photographs, manuscripts, and letters to and from correspondents like Clement Greenberg, Richard Diebenkorn, and Clyfford Still. Through Oct. 7. (1285 Sixth Ave. 212-399-5015.)

"Peking Opera Actress Holding Fan, Beijing" (1996), by Liu Zheng, at Milo.

CRISTIÁN SILVA
The best work here is the one least indebted to the artist: a video collage of unaccountably touching Chilean television commercials for a malted-milk drink that promises to turn pint-size athletes into Olympians. The runner-up is "Cilantro and Parsley," a pair of soft green motorized plastic hands protruding from a wall, each shaking a bunch of herbs; the point is something about how foodstuffs serve as shorthand for national identity. The rest of the work meanders, in both form and content: a wall drawing of a drum set, a geometric metal coffee table, and more sculptures, with little discernible connective tissue. Through Aug. 5. (Projectile, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-4673.)

IRIS VAN DONGEN
Van Dongen trolls the archeology of modernism, particularly Pre-Raphaelitism and Art Nouveau, for a series of paintings and works on paper. Gustav Klimt's textile-inspired patterning and vertical format are appropriated for a triptych of contemporary young women, one of whom is also a dead ringer for an Aubrey Beardsley femme fatale. A larger painting depicts a young woman with alabaster skin, Rossetti-style bee-stung lips, and an ornate scarf *à la* Klimt, standing on a gravestone. It's not entirely uninteresting, but one's time might be better spent revisiting the Neue Galerie and other sources from which these works were cribbed. Through Sept. 15. (Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212.)

"GIRLS ON FILM"
Brazenly staring out at the viewer, Manet's "Olympia" embodied the chutzpah that ushered in modernism. The postmodern women on view here wear a few more layers of history and culture, but they beg the same question: for whom do they pose? The show's conceptual godmother is Cindy Sherman, whose film stills muddy distinctions between viewer, self, and other. Many of the artists, including Martha Rosler, Carol Bove, and Wangechi Mutu, use collaged images to meditate on beauty and female objectification. The title gets literal with Larry Sultan's photos of women on porn-film sets and in the *pièce de résistance*, Candice Breitz's video series in which she mimics movie scenes originally performed by Julia Roberts, Cameron Diaz, and Jennifer Lopez. Through Sept. 2. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ELINOR CARUCCI
This group of color photos from Carucci's new book, "Diary of a Dancer," are modestly sized and casually pinned right to the wall, but they're in no way minor work. In addition to being a fine photographer, Carucci is a professional Middle Eastern dancer who sometimes performs several times a night. Her pictures—the best of them slippery panoramas reminiscent of Sylvia Plachy's—capture the heat and humor of the dance as well as the backstage preparation: eyeliner applied on the subway, costume adjustments at a public-bathroom sink. Though not as intimate as her earlier family photos, these are wonderfully loose, even woozy at times, and full of life. Through August 19. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4819.)

"IDOLS OF PERVERSITY"
A show that blows apart stagnant notions of womanhood, using Bram Dijkstra's 1988 text "Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture" as a field guide. The idols range from Ray Caesar's consumptive Victorian waifs (smoking, no less) to Colin Christian's scary, futuristic seven-foot fibreglass sculpture of a woman-Satyr. Duncan Hannah's retro-kitsch paintings "The Harem Girl" and "The Mournful Schoolgirl" obliterate the gap between virgin and whore, while the Mexican artist Dr. Lakra draws tattoos and bloodstains on demure ladies from the pages of vintage magazines (his work is also in "Girls on Film," uptown). Through Aug. 5. (Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-929-5959.)

"LIFE AND LIMB"
An ambitious curatorial gambit makes a summer group show worth noticing, as with David Humphrey's large but tightly edited investigation of narrative, figuration, fear, and dreamlike violence. Sculpture, photography, painting, printmaking, drawing, and video are all here, and the age range is similarly eclectic—from gray eminences like Max Beckmann, Henry Darger, and James Ensor to just-emerging practitioners. Also among the artists are Tim Davis, Kerry James Marshall, Inka Essenhigh, and Jim Nutt. Through July 30. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 212-929-0500.)

"THE MOST SPLENDID APOCALYPSE"
One of several summer group shows dealing with the spectre of world destruction, "Apocalypse" takes a jaunty look at revelations, raptures, great awakenings, and wholesale annihilations. Dotty Attie's small paintings feature delicate, illustrational grisailles of figures in gas masks; Amy Wilson's drawings are peopled by tiny girls in swingy dresses, the speech bubbles over their heads filled with worries about Armageddon and media lies; and Tony Matelli cuts right to the chase with a pile of latex vomit. Among the Jeremiahs are Jesse Bransford, Barnaby Furnas, Mala Iqbal, Keith Mayerson, and Steve Mumford. Through July 30. (P.P.O.W., 555 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044.)

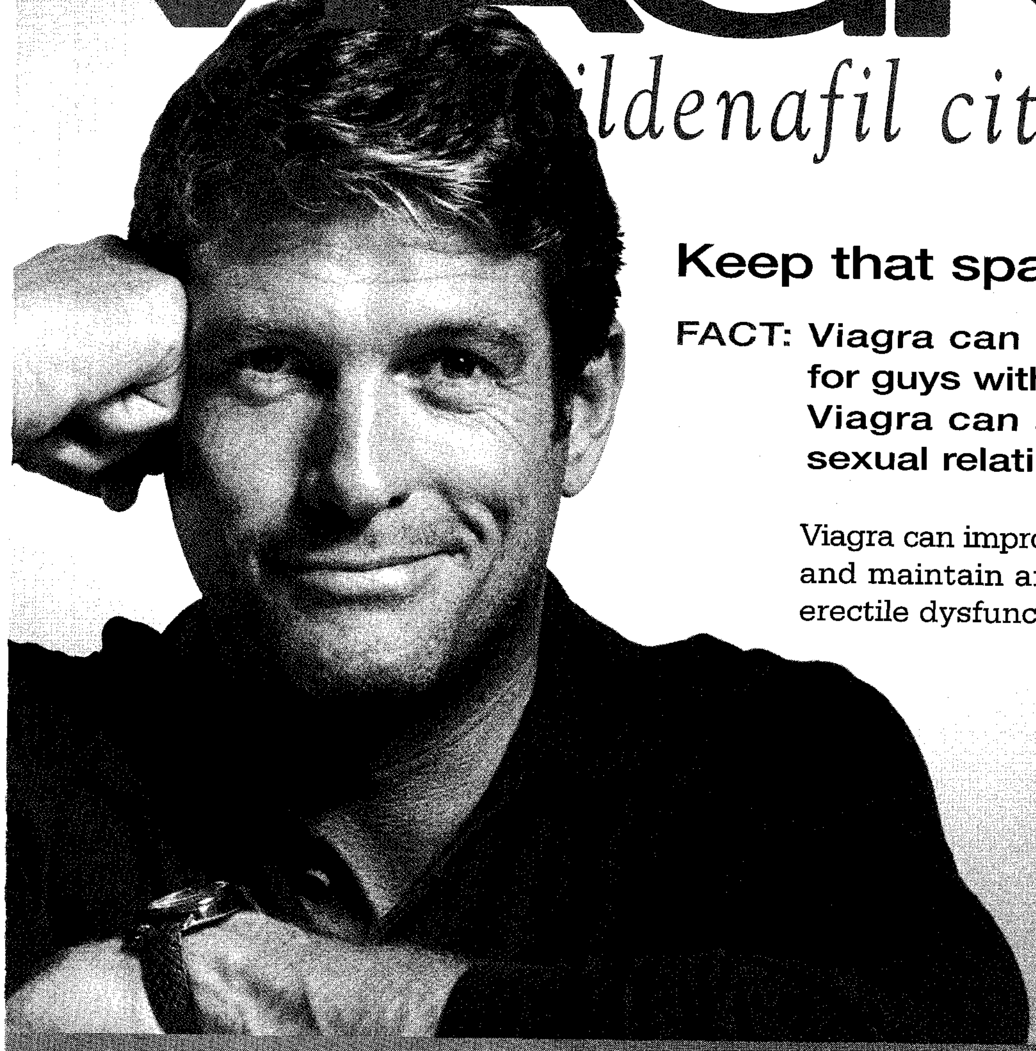
Short List

LIU ZHENG: Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through Aug. 26. **KARIN WEINER:** ZieherSmith, 531 W. 25th St. 212-229-1088. Through July 29. **"JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR":** Bruce Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930. Through July 29. **"MIRAGE":** Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave. 212-367-7474. Through July 29.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

"HUNCH & FLAIL"
A group show curated by the painter Amy Sillman accepts discomfort and disorientation as inevitable, while tacitly exploring themes of landscape, clowning, and the desire to connect. A video by A. L. Steiner flashes through pinup/porno shots of very normal but alluring girls in (and out of) their underwear as a woman's voice mumbles, "I want, I really want." Pam Lins's low-tech constructions seem to dream of becoming trompe-l'oeil architectural follies but accept their own slacker failure, while Hilary Harnischfeger's constructed-paper drawing looks lumpy and haphazard from afar, intricate and whimsical up close. With Michael Smith, Phyllis Baldino, Karl Haendel, and others. Through July 29. (Artists Space, 38 Greene St. 212-226-3970.)

"PHILOSOPHICAL TOYS"
Friedrich Fröbel's "gifts" are a series of simple, geometric problem sets, demonstrated with blocks and colored papers, which the nineteenth-century inventor of kindergarten hoped would teach children the wonders of visual form. Here, these are displayed with related works, like the contemporary "outsider logician" Shea Zellweger's sculptural objects that aim to teach logic as a finger game, and folded-paper objects by Jeannine Mosely, an electrical engineer famous for her origami models. Through July 30. (Apex Art, 291 Church St. 212-431-5270.)



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VIAGRA is prescribed to treat erectile dysfunction. We know that no medicine is for everyone. If you use nitrate drugs, often used for chest pain (known as angina), don't take VIAGRA. Taking these drugs together could cause your blood pressure to drop to an unsafe level.

The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, facial flushing, and upset stomach. Less common are bluish or blurred vision, or being sensitive to light. These may occur for a brief time. Remember to protect yourself and your partner from sexually transmitted diseases.

Talk with your doctor first. Make sure you are healthy enough to have sex. If you have chest pain, nausea, or other discomforts during sex, seek medical help right away. Although erections lasting for more than four hours may occur rarely with all ED treatments in this drug class, it is important to seek immediate medical attention. Erections lasting longer than six hours can result in long-term loss of potency.

VIAGRA is covered under most Managed Care Plans.

Please see our patient summary of information for VIAGRA (25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg) tablets on the following page.

Pfizer U.S. Pharmaceuticals

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PATIENT SUMMARY OF INFORMATION ABOUT **VIAGRA®**

(sildenafil citrate) tablets

This summary contains important information about VIAGRA®. It is not meant to take the place of your doctor's instructions. Read this information carefully before you start taking VIAGRA. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you do not understand any of this information or if you want to know more about VIAGRA.

This medicine can help many men when it is used as prescribed by their doctors. However, VIAGRA is not for everyone. It is intended for use only by men who have a condition called erectile dysfunction. **VIAGRA must never be used by men who are taking medicines that contain nitrates of any kind, at any time. This includes nitroglycerin. *If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe or life threatening level.***

• What Is VIAGRA?

VIAGRA is a pill used to treat erectile dysfunction (impotence) in men. It can help many men who have erectile dysfunction get and keep an erection when they become sexually excited (stimulated).

You will not get an erection just by taking this medicine. VIAGRA helps a man with erectile dysfunction get an erection only when he is sexually excited.

• How Sex Affects the Body

When a man is sexually excited, the penis rapidly fills with more blood than usual. The penis then expands and hardens. This is called an erection. After the man is done having sex, this extra blood flows out of the penis back into the body. The erection goes away. If an erection lasts for a long time (more than 6 hours), it can permanently damage your penis. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have a prolonged erection that lasts more than 4 hours.

Some conditions and medicines interfere with this natural erection process. The penis cannot fill with enough blood. The man cannot have an erection. This is called erectile dysfunction if it becomes a frequent problem.

During sex, your heart works harder. Therefore sexual activity may not be advisable for people who have heart problems. Before you start any treatment for erectile dysfunction, ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex. If you have chest pains, dizziness or nausea during sex, stop having sex and immediately tell your doctor you have had this problem.

• How VIAGRA Works

VIAGRA enables many men with erectile dysfunction to respond to sexual stimulation. When a man is sexually excited, VIAGRA helps the penis fill with enough blood to cause an erection. After sex is over, the erection goes away.

• VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone

As noted above (*How Sex Affects the Body*), ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough for sexual activity.

If you take any medicines that contain nitrates – either regularly or as needed – you should never take VIAGRA. If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine or recreational drug containing nitrates, your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe level. You could get dizzy, faint, or even have a heart attack or stroke. Nitrates are found in many prescription medicines that are used to treat angina (chest *pain due to heart disease*) such as:

- nitroglycerin (sprays, ointments, skin patches or pastes, and tablets that are swallowed or dissolved in the mouth)
- isosorbide mononitrate and isosorbide dinitrate (tablets that are swallowed, chewed, or dissolved in the mouth)

Nitrates are also found in recreational drugs such as amyl nitrate or nitrite ("poppers"). If you are not sure if any of your medicines contain nitrates, or if you do not understand what nitrates are, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

VIAGRA is only for patients with erectile dysfunction. VIAGRA is not *for newborns, children, or women. Do not let anyone else take your* VIAGRA. VIAGRA must be used only under a doctor's supervision.

• What VIAGRA Does Not Do

- VIAGRA does not cure erectile dysfunction. It is a treatment for erectile dysfunction.
- VIAGRA does not protect you or your partner from getting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV — the virus that causes AIDS.
- VIAGRA is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac.

• What To Tell Your Doctor Before You Begin VIAGRA

Only your doctor can decide if VIAGRA is right for you. VIAGRA can cause mild, temporary lowering of your blood pressure. You will need to have a thorough medical exam to diagnose your erectile dysfunction and to find out if you can safely take VIAGRA alone or with your other medicines. Your doctor should determine if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex.

Be sure to tell your doctor if you:

- have ever had any heart problems (e.g., angina, chest pain, heart failure, irregular heart beats, heart attack or narrowing of the aortic valve)
- have ever had a stroke
- have low or high blood pressure
- have a rare inherited eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa
- have ever had any kidney problems
- have ever had any liver problems
- have ever had any blood problems, including sickle cell anemia or leukemia
- are allergic to sildenafil or any of the other ingredients of VIAGRA tablets
- have a deformed penis, Peyronie's disease, or ever had an erection that lasted more than 4 hours
- have stomach ulcers or any types of bleeding problems
- are taking any other medicines

• VIAGRA and Other Medicines

Some medicines can change the way VIAGRA works. Tell your doctor about **any medicines** you are taking. Do not start or stop taking any medicines before checking with your doctor or pharmacist. This includes prescription and nonprescription medicines or remedies:

- Remember, VIAGRA should never be used with medicines that contain nitrates (see *VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone*).
- If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy for the treatment of high blood pressure or prostate problems, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time *(within 4 hours) as you take your dose of alpha-blocker.*
- If you are taking a protease inhibitor, your dose may be adjusted (please see *Finding the Right Dose for You*).
- VIAGRA should not be used with any other medical treatments that cause erections. These treatments include pills, medicines that are injected or inserted into the penis, implants or vacuum pumps.

• Finding the Right Dose for You

VIAGRA comes in different doses (25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg). If you do not get the results you expect, talk with your doctor. You and your *doctor can determine the dose that works best for you.*

- Do not take more VIAGRA than your doctor prescribes.
- If you think you need a larger dose of VIAGRA, check with your doctor.
- VIAGRA should not be taken more than once a day.

If you are older than age 65, or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg) of VIAGRA. If you are taking protease inhibitors, such as for the treatment of HIV, your doctor may recommend a 25 mg dose and may limit you to a maximum single dose of 25 mg of VIAGRA in a 48 hour period. If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as your dose of alpha-blocker.

• How To Take VIAGRA

Take VIAGRA about one hour before you plan to have sex. Beginning in about 30 minutes and for up to 4 hours, VIAGRA can help you get an erection if you are sexually excited. If you take VIAGRA after a high-fat meal (such as a cheeseburger and french fries), the medicine may take a little longer to start working. VIAGRA can help you get an erection when you are sexually excited. You will not get an erection just by taking the pill.

• Possible Side Effects

Like all medicines, VIAGRA can cause some side effects. These effects are usually mild to moderate and usually don't last longer than a few hours. Some of these side effects are more likely to occur with higher doses. The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, flushing of the face, and upset stomach. Less common side effects that may occur are temporary changes in color vision (such as trouble telling the difference between blue and green objects or having a blue color tinge to them), eyes being more sensitive to light, or blurred vision.

In rare instances, men have reported an erection that lasts many hours. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. If not treated right away, permanent damage to your penis could occur (see *How Sex Affects the Body*).

Heart attack, stroke, irregular heart beats, and death have been reported rarely in men taking VIAGRA. Most, but not all, of these men had heart problems before taking this medicine. It is not possible to determine whether these events were directly related to VIAGRA.

VIAGRA may cause other side effects besides those listed on this sheet. If you want more information or develop any side effects or *symptoms you are concerned about, call your doctor.*

• Accidental Overdose

In case of accidental overdose, call your doctor right away.

• Storing VIAGRA

Keep VIAGRA out of the reach of children. Keep VIAGRA in its original container. Store at 25°C (77°F); excursions permitted to 15-30°C (59-86°F) [see USP Controlled Room Temperature].

• For More Information on VIAGRA

VIAGRA is a prescription medicine used to treat erectile dysfunction. Only your doctor can decide if it is right for you. This sheet is only a *summary. If you have any questions or want more information about* VIAGRA, talk with your doctor or pharmacist, visit www.viagra.com, or call 1-888-4VIAGRA.

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DANCE

BOLSHOI BALLET

The troupe concludes its season at the Metropolitan Opera House with two ballets never before seen in North America: "The Bright Stream," a satire that takes place on a collective farm, set to music by Shostakovich, and "The Pharaoh's Daughter," a romance about an Englishman who dreams of winning an exotic bride. ♦ July 25-27 at 8: "The Bright Stream." ♦ July 28-29 at 8 and July 30 at 2 and 8: "The Pharaoh's Daughter." (Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000.)

NILAS MARTINS DANCE COMPANY

Martins brings his fine team of New York City Ballet dancers—Miranda Weese, Albert Evans, Joaquin De Luz, Megan Fairchild, Ashley Bouder, and several others—to Central Park SummerStage to present "The Balanchine Legacy," featuring "Allegro Brillante," excerpts from "Harlequinade," "Tarantella," "Symphony in Three Movements, Pas de Deux," and "Valse Fantaisie." The evening also includes the Peter Martins ballet "A Fool for You," from 1988, which is set to songs by the late Ray Charles—who performed them live at City Ballet at the time—and is staged here as a tribute. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777. No tickets necessary. July 28-29 at 8:30.)

PILOBOLUS

Three programs alternate in the company's season at the Joyce: "Suspended," in which the dancers dangle from harnesses and silks and fly through the air; "Aquatic," an undersea spectacle; and the rocking evening-length program "Megawatt > Full Strength." For complete schedule, see www.joyce.org. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 25-29 and Aug. 1-2 at 8 and July 30 at 2 and 8. Through Aug. 6.)

VERTIGO DANCE COMPANY

The Israeli troupe, led by the choreographer Noa Wertheim, performs on a stage scattered with earth in the site-specific piece "Birth of the Phoenix," which explores the relationship between man and environment. (Riverside Park, at the 73rd St. track. No tickets necessary; donation suggested. 646-505-5708. July 26-28 at 8:30.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA

Martín Santangelo, the artistic director of this Spanish troupe, aims for a spare aesthetic, which has become more naked and intimate with each production. Such soul-baring is best appreciated up close and unamplified, which makes the small, down-at-heel Theatre 80 an ideal venue. This time around, the extraordinary Soledad Barrio is the lone woman, sharing the stage with the dancers Santangelo, Antonio Rodriguez, and Bruno Argenta, plus four musicians. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-352-3101. July 27-28 at 7:30, July 29-30 at 7:30 and 10, and July 31 at 5.)

"PLAY PLAY FASTER FASTER"

Aaron Rosenblum, Sara Juli, John Wyszniewski, Jake Hooker, Jessica Barbagallo, and other lights of the downtown dance and theatre scenes present a series of solos, trios, and ensemble pieces about the opposition between animal instincts and civilizing impulses in human nature. A Big Dance Theatre presentation. (The Dumbo Stable, 16 Main St., at Water St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. July 28-29 at 8. Through Aug. 5.)

"BOUNCE"

In previous incarnations, this high-spirited romp from the choreographer Eva Dean was entitled "Balls, Balls, Balls" and "Oh Balls!" In the course of the show, the flexible all-female cast stretches, leaps, dives, and balances over scores of brightly colored balls. Here, in a suite of interconnected dances, Dean deploys her orbs on the beach, where they feature in a bathing-beauty number; in a mystical moon garden, in which they stand in for planets; and in a cascading, bouncing waterfall. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. July 27-29 at 7:30, July 30 at 2 and 7:30, and July 31 at 2.)

DODGE DANCE COMPANY

In her season at the Joyce SoHo, the choreographer and former Paul Taylor dancer Susan Dodge shows energy and verve. In "Canvas," one of five new works, her dancers stretch and lean their sculpted bodies in time with a Baroque chamber sonata by

Jean-Baptiste Loeillet. They use their faces as well as their limbs: when they crawl deliberately across the stage or leap forward with joy, their expressions reflect the emotion of each movement. A breezier piece, the gangsters-and-molls mambo number "Saturday Night Special," has a zany, comic vitality. (155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. July 28-31 at 8.)

"OASIS 2005"

Chashama's eighth annual free festival of new dance and music takes place east of Grand Central on a stage in a storefront window. Behind the glass, original work by forty modern and experimental choreographers and composers plays in twenty-minute blocks during lunch hour and cocktail hour; outdoor speakers encourage rubbernecking. The lineup includes Mariana Bekerman Dance Company, Clarinda Mac Low, Dance Entropy, Rocha Dance Theatre, and many other groups. For full schedule, visit www.chashama.org. (217 E. 42nd St. July 25-29 from noon to 1:30 and 5 to 7.)

"TO ONE I SAW SMALL"

South Pleasant Company presents a comic movement-theatre piece by Cristina Septien, about the mixed-up life of a spelling-bee champ named Ruthie. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 212-352-7112. July 28-30 at 9.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW

Mark Morris Dance Group presents some of the choreographer's classics and strong recent work on the main stage, while the much heralded young choreographer Aszure Barton brings her company to the Doris Duke. Though Morris's "Rock of Ages," set to Schubert's Adagio in E-Flat, is a brief, minimal quartet, and "All Fours," set to Bartók's String Quartet No. 4, is dramatic and large-scaled, both exhibit his famed musicality. "The 'Tamil Film Songs in Stereo' Pas de Deux," from 1983, recalls the irreverence that first got him attention, while the 1993 ensemble romp "Grand Duo" shows what he made of his folk-dance roots. The score for Barton's "Mais We" samples a Hungarian poem, *kodo* drumming, French pop, and more. Such eclecticism often signals a sputtering imagination; here it reveals, delightfully, a genuinely protean talent. Morris: July 26-29 at 8, July 30 at 2 and 8, and July 31 at 2. Aszure & Artists: July 28-29 at 8:15, July 30 at 2:15 and 8:15, and July 31 at 5. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

INTERNATIONAL KEYBOARD INSTITUTE AND FESTIVAL

July 27 at 8: The fortepianist Melvyn Tan, a noted early-music specialist, offers sonatas by Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert (in B-Flat, D. 960) on a modern Steinway grand. ♦ July 30 at 8: Marc-André Hamelin—always a brilliant technician, but now an increasingly compelling interpreter—performs Schubert's Sonata in A Major, D. 664, along with operatic paraphrases after Wagner, Verdi, and Bellini ("Reminiscences de 'Norma' ") by Liszt. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. 212-580-0210, ext. 4858. For full schedule, see www.ikif.org.)

BARGEMUSIC

July 28-29 at 7:30: A program of Bach, Beethoven (the Sonata in E Major, Op. 109), and Mussorgsky ("Pictures at an Exhibition"), offered by the pianist Steven Beck. ♦ July 30 at 7:30 and July 31 at 4: The violinist David Chan, the cellist Thomas Kraines, and the pianist Reiko Uchida perform piano trios by Mozart (in G Major, K. 564), Rachmaninoff, and Schumann (in F Major, Op. 80). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

"Traveling with Mozart" is the (very loose) theme of this year's festival, with four weeks of programming based on the music of cities Mozart visited (Paris, London, Prague, Milan) or merely fantasized about (Moscow and St. Petersburg). July 28 at 8: The soprano Renée Fleming and the pianist Stephen Hough grace the opening-night program, which features Mozart's "Haffner" Symphony, the Andante from the Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, and a clutch of arias from two of Handel's English oratorios, "Samson" and "Semele"; Louis Langrée, the festival's music director, conducts the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 2-3 at 8: Langrée and his orchestra return to repeat the "Haffner" on a gala program that also features Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-Flat (with Emanuel Ax) and the concert aria "Ah, lo previdi" (with the soprano Emma Bell, in her American début). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Note: Ax, after each of his concerts, will repair to the Kaplan Penthouse at 10:30 to offer the first two events of the festival's "A Little Night Music" series, on a Parisian theme; Bell will join him on Aug. 3. (212-721-6500.)

OUT OF TOWN

BERKSHIRE OPERA

Two wily sex comedies—Menotti's "The Old Maid and the Thief" and Ravel's "The Spanish Hour"—are this longtime company's latest fare, offered at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, a renovated movie palace; Kathleen Kelly conducts a cast of young hopefuls, with a small ensemble. (Great Barrington, Mass. 413-442-0099. July 25, July 27, and July 30 at 8 and July 29 at 2.)

TANGLEWOOD

July 27 at 8:30: The (Pinchas) Zukerman Chamber Players, led by the estimable violinist, perform music by Mozart, Brahms (the String Quintet No. 2 in G Major), and Beethoven. ♦ July 29 at 8:30: Charles Dutoit appears with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducting works by Wagner, Sibelius (the Violin Concerto, with Lisa Batiashvili), and Stravinsky ("The Rite of Spring"). ♦ July 30 at 8:30: Frederica von Stade is the special guest for a concert featuring Ravel's "Shéhérazade," Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, and a selection of Canteloube's "Songs of the Auvergne." Hans Graf conducts. ♦ July 31 at 2:30: Dutoit returns to lead the B.S.O. in a stylish program of works by Mozart, Ravel (the Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, with Jean-Yves Thibaudet), and Rachmaninoff (the "Symphonic Dances"). ♦ Aug. 2 at 8:30: Matthias Goerne, a baritone voice of dark hue and relentless concentration, sings songs by Mahler, Wagner, and Berg, with the pianist Alexander Schmalcz. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL

July 28 at 7:30: In "The New Romantics," the Music from Copland House ensemble (featuring the pianist Michael Boriskin) offers works by Danielpour, Liebermann, Moravec, and other expressively inclined composers. ♦ July 29 at 8: The latest of the festival's "Extreme Chamber Music" concerts features the clarinettist Paquito D'Rivera and friends, performing music by Brahms (the Clarinet Trio), D'Rivera, and others. ♦ July 30 at 3: "Modern Jazz at 60" is the theme for the first weekend of the Caramoor Jazz Festival, a marathon concert (curated by Joe Lovano) that will feature the Mingus Dynasty group and a "Saxophone Summit" with Lovano, Michael Brecker, and Dave Liebman. ♦ July 31 at 4:30: The Orchestra of St. Luke's returns to the Venetian Theatre, with Donald Runnicles conducting Mozart's Symphony No. 29 in A Major and Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor (with Peter Serkin) along with Haydn's noble Symphony No. 102. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

July 28 at 8, July 30 at 1:30, and Aug. 2 at 2: A French double bill of Massenet's **"Le Portrait de Manon"** (with Theodore Baerg, Bruce Reed, Colin Ainsworth, and Kristine Winkler, conducted by Andrew Bisantz) and Poulenc's **"La Voix Humaine"** (a star turn for the soprano Amy Burton, conducted by Stewart Robertson). ♦ July 29 at 8 and Aug. 1 at 2: Lillian Groag's production of Donizetti's **"Lucie de Lammermoor,"** the compact 1839 Paris version of "Lucia," is a clunky feminist parable (something about women wearing antlers on their heads), but the singing makes it worthwhile, especially the piercing coloratura of Sarah Coburn, in the title role, and the Latin ardor and supple phrasing of Raúl Hernán-

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
COPLAND'S AMERICA

KIM DEMARCO

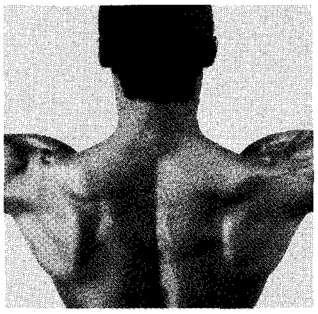
Aaron Copland declared in 1941: "The composer who is frightened of losing his artistic integrity through contact with a mass audience is no longer aware of the meaning of the word art." The creator of "Appalachian Spring" and "Fanfare for the Common Man" became a bona-fide American icon in his lifetime, a signifier of the great wide open, and he only gained integrity over time. Equally at ease in deserts of dissonance and meadows of triads, he emerged from the twentieth century as an artist of arresting complexity. This summer, Bard College is celebrating Copland in grand style: in its annual Music Festival, it is presenting two weekends of his music, together with works of other American composers who profited from his generosity, and, in the SummerScape series, fellow-spirited works such as Marc Blitzstein's opera "Regina," William Wyler's films, and Jerome Moross's musical "The Golden Apple." There is also a superb companion volume, "Aaron Copland and His World" (Princeton), which goes deep inside his politics and aesthetics, leaving his gentle mystery intact.

—*Alex Ross*

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
CROSS PURPOSES

If the title of the large group show currently at Bruce Silverstein, "Jesus Christ Superstar," is off-puttingly flippant, one step into the gallery should reassure you. Hugging a corner just inside the gallery's entrance are photographs by Robert Frank and Leon Levinstein of hard-bitten old men, one proffering a copy of *Awake!* and the other clutching a hand-lettered sign claiming "Jesus Christ Is Coming." You've been warned. The show that follows, adapted from a more extensive survey called "Corpus Christi: Representations of Christ in Photography 1855-2002" that Nissan Perez curated for the Israel Museum, is not for the evangelical or the excessively pious. But its irreverence, though considerable, is never careless or coarse. The savvy, surprising selection includes—along with images by Man Ray, Andres Serrano, Walker Evans, Nancy Burson, and David Wojnarowicz—one of the earliest photos of the Shroud of Turin, Vik Muniz's three-panel rendering of "The Last Supper" in chocolate, and F. Holland Day's startling 1898 portrait of himself as the crucified Christ.

—*Vince Aletti*



ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE, "DERRICK CROSS" (1983)

dez as Edgard; Beatrice Jona Affron conducts. ♦ July 30 at 8: **"Così Fan Tutte,"** the most annoyingly artificial of Mozart's great operas, gets a new lease on life thanks to the clean lines of Tim Albery's production, a setup in which a nineteenth-century camera box with an expanding lens (literally) gives his characters room to explore the buried emotions in Da Ponte's absurd scenario. With wonderful performances from Anne-Sophie Duprels, Sandra Piques Eddy, Camille Zamora, John Tessier, Palle Knudsen, and Sanford Sylvan; Robertson, the company's music director and a careful and attentive Mozartean, presides in the pit. ♦ July 31 at 2: Tazewell Thompson's new staging of **"Death in Venice,"** an opera that seems an ever more vital entry in the Britten canon. William Burden is Aschenbach, and David Pittsinger sings the multifaceted role of the Traveller; Robertson. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255. Through Aug. 23.)

ASTON MAGNA FESTIVAL
The eminent fortepianist Robert Levin performs in an all-Beethoven concert featuring an authentic arrangement of the Concerto No. 4 in G Major for piano and string quartet. (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7425. July 29 at 8.)

BARD SUMMERSCAPE: "REGINA"
Summerscape, not so much a festival as a gathering force, enters classical territory with Marc Blitzstein's magnum opus, a grand operatic adaptation of Hellman's "The Little Foxes." Leon Botstein conducts the American Symphony Orchestra, Peter Schneider directs, and the formidable Lauren Flanigan takes the title role. (Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. July 29, Aug. 3, and Aug. 5-6 at 8 and July 31 at 3.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
July 29 at 8: The four wise men of the Tokyo String Quartet apply their talents to works by Schubert, Hayashi, and Beethoven (the first of the "Razumovsky" Quartets). ♦ July 30 at 8: Norfolk serves as the summer arm of the Yale School of Music, and Brahms, that most academic of the great Romantics, is its virtual patron saint. Members of the Tokyo, and friends (including the clarinettist David Krakauer), offer the composer's Cello Sonata No. 1, along with the Horn Trio, Op. 40, and the Clarinet Trio, Op. 114. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

BANG ON A CAN SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The downtown collective's annual summer school and festival (known affectionately as "Banglewood") comes to a ritual close—the traditional "marathon" concert, for which listeners may drop by for as long as they like. Steve Reich is the special guest this year (along with such stalwarts as the violinist Todd Reynolds and the cellist Wendy Sutter, and three young musicians from Uzbekistan) for a six-hour feast of music from the minimalist, classical, jazz, ambient, and Central Asian traditions. (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, Mass. 413-662-2111. July 30 at 4.)

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
This high-quality series, the brainchild of the flutist Marya Martin, begins this week; the highlight is "Point, Counterpoint," a concert of works by Telemann, Handel, and Mozart (the Piano Quartet No. 2 in E-Flat Major) offered by Martin, the violinist Axel Strauss, and the harpsichordist Kenneth Cooper, among others. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church, Bridgehampton, N.Y. 631-537-6368. July 31 at 6:30.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE ARISTOCRATS
More than a hundred comedians analyze, discuss, and give their rendition of the burlesque routine "The Aristocrats," the so-called dirtiest joke ever told. With George Carlin, Whoopi Goldberg, and Drew Carey. Opening July 29. (Lincoln Square and Union Square.)

BALZAC AND THE LITTLE CHINESE SEAMSTRESS
Dai Sijie directed this drama, based on his book about a man's time spent in a Maoist reëducation camp during China's Cultural Revolution. In Mandarin and French. Opening July 29. (Paris.)

MUST LOVE DOGS
Diane Lane plays a newly divorced woman cautiously rediscovering romance, in a comedy directed by Gary David Goldberg. With John Cusack, Dermot Mulroney, and Elizabeth Perkins. Opening July 29. (In wide release.)

OYSTER FARMER
A comedy directed by Anna Reeves, about an incompetent thief who becomes a hero in a small Australian oyster-farming town. Opening July 29. (Quad Cinema.)

SKY HIGH
An action-adventure comedy set in a high school for superheroes, directed by Mike Mitchell. With Kelly Preston, Kurt Russell, and Lynda Carter. Opening July 29. (In wide release.)

STEALTH
Rob Cohen ("XXX") directed this action movie, in which a team of pilots must bring down an out-of-control experimental drone plane. With Josh Lucas, Jessica Biel, and Jamie Foxx. Opening July 29. (In wide release.)

THE 3 ROOMS OF MELANCHOLIA
A documentary about Chechen children in a Russian military school who are trained to fight Russia's ethnic wars. Directed by Pirjo Honkasalo. In Russian, Arabic, and Chechen. Opening July 27. (Film Forum.)

TONY TAKITANI
Jun Ichikawa directed this drama based on a Haruki Murakami story, about an illustrator who falls in love with a couture-addicted younger woman. In Japanese. Opening July 29. (Angelika Film Center.)

NOW PLAYING

BATMAN BEGINS
And ends with a whimper. Christopher Nolan, working with a screenplay that he wrote with David S. Goyer, has attempted a literal-minded myth of creation. The orphaned young Bruce Wayne (a gloomy Christian Bale) undergoes an initiation in some nameless Asian snowcapped mountains, where he's trained by a morally ambiguous adjunct (Liam Neeson) to a shadowy ninja vigilante leader (Ken Watanabe). The screenplay sounds as if it were written after a course in self-realization taken on Santa Monica Boulevard, and the direction is both pompous and cheesy, with ridiculous plot developments and lots of whirling movement shot so close that we can't really see anything. Gotham is no longer a malignant paradise of evil; it's just dark. With Morgan Freeman and Michael Caine wasted in poorly written roles as Batman's allies.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/13 & 20/05.) (In wide release.)

THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED
The jumpy young hero of Jacques Audiard's new film, Thomas Seyr (Romain Duris), works at sordid real-estate schemes while dreaming of a career as a concert pianist. As Tom tears around Paris, rushing in and out of buildings and clubs, Audiard and his cinematographer, Stéphane Fontaine, crowd in behind him. In his black leather jacket, Duris is an anxious little hot shot with a twitchy, feral snarl that comes close to the reflexive grimace of the dangerous young Jean-Louis Trintignant. As Tom begins to move away from crime, the picture doesn't collapse into a stuffy display of virtue—the classical music that might save the hero is just as dangerous for him as his life of intimidation and fraud. With Niels Arestrup as Tom's baleful old reprobate father and Linh-Dan Pham as the Vietnamese pianist who takes him on as a student. This remake is more realistic and convincing than the movie it was based on, the notorious James Toback picture from 1978, "Fingers," in which Harvey Keitel starred as a Mafia enforcer who loved to play Bach. In French.—*D.D.* (7/4/05) (In wide release.)

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY
In Tim Burton's adaptation of the book by Roald Dahl, Johnny Depp plays Willy Wonka and Freddie Highmore plays Charlie, who, having found one of five golden tickets hidden in a chocolate bar, wins a

tour of Wonka's chocolate factory. Depp, as Wonka, dresses like Oscar Wilde, smiles like Michael Jackson, enunciates like Tootsie, and wears rubbery purple gloves to keep away the germs—and is far more of a child than the actual children around him. The movie is surprisingly unwild, though often astounding—Burton summons succulent and strange details such as a thunderous, cocoa-hued waterfall and bulging pink sheep that are sheared for their fleeces of cotton candy—but the eye, no less than the palate, is at first dizzied, then acclimatized, then jaded, and, finally, semi-sickened. To chide a movie that oozes so many gags may sound churlish, but you can't help feeling that a fantasist as accomplished as Burton can manage this kind of project with his eyes shut.—*Anthony Lane* (7/25/05) (In wide release.)

THE CONFORMIST

Bernardo Bertolucci wrote and directed this extraordinarily rich 1970 adaptation of the Alberto Moravia novel about an upper-class follower of Mussolini. It's set principally in 1938. Bertolucci's view isn't so much a reconstruction of the past as an infusion from it; the film cost only $750,000—Bertolucci brought together the décor and architecture surviving from that modernistic period and gave it all unity. Jean-Louis Trintignant, who conveys the mechanisms of thought through tension, the way Bogart did, is the aristocratic Fascist—an intelligent coward who sacrifices everything he cares about because he wants the safety of normality. Stefania Sandrelli is his deliciously corrupt, empty-headed wife, and Dominique Sanda, with her swollen lips and tiger eyes, is the lesbian he would like to run away with. The film succeeds least with its psychosexual approach to the Fascist protagonist, but if the ideas don't touch the imagination, the film's sensuous texture does. It's a triumph of feeling and of style—lyrical, flowing, velvety style, so operatic that you come away with sequences in your head like arias. Cinematography by Vittorio Storaro. In Italian.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; July 29-Aug. 2.)

THE EDUKATORS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

FANTASTIC FOUR

If you prefer your cataclysms free of terrorist overtones and your superheroes unburdened by Freudian subtext—sometimes a comic book is just a comic book, after all—you could do worse than this flick. Four scientists and their corporate sponsor (guess who's the bad guy) are conducting experiments on a space station when they're hit by an unexpectedly powerful blast of solar radiation, altering their DNA and giving them freakish powers that cleverly reflect their personalities. Playing the characters created by the Marvel Comics master Stan Lee, the actors Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans, and Michael Chiklis inhabit their dual identities gracefully; they're superheroes without being superstars. It may not have the emotional sweep of "Superman" or "Spider-Man," but "Fantastic Four" glides along free of the dark, pretentious weight of some recent superhero films. The director, Tim Story ("Barbershop"), tells his tale with clarity and wit. It's a simple popcorn movie—not fantastic, but fun.—*Ken Marks* (In wide release.)

HAPPY ENDINGS

A complicated and excessively self-conscious mess that doesn't, in the end, add up to a lot but that has many affecting and funny moments along the way. Lisa Kudrow, teaming up again with the writer-director Don Roos (they made the tart "Opposite of Sex" in 1998), plays Mamie, a sardonic Los Angeles woman who gave up her son at birth and is being blackmailed by a chaotic young filmmaker (Jesse Bradford) who claims to know the name and whereabouts of the boy, now a teen-ager. In parallel stories, two gay men duel with a lesbian couple over the paternity of a baby, and a drifting young club singer and sex parasite (Maggie Gyllenhaal) seduces both a young gay man (Jason Ritter) and his wealthy widower father (Tom Arnold). Roos is trying to devise a shorthand method of unifying a whirl of narrative events, but he hasn't done the basic work of construction that would pull the stories together. Much of the writing is lively, however, and the actors are good—especially Gyllenhaal, who, as a very bad girl, has an irresistible smile.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

HUSTLE & FLOW

As DJay, a low-rent South Memphis pimp, Terrence Howard speaks in a soft, smoky voice that trails off into nowhere. His talkative hustler has the obscure, ruminative wit of an old bluesman; he turns his comeons and rants into a sullen art. The movie asks whether that particular art is convertible yet again—whether DJay's hustle can be converted into the thumping flow of the Memphis-style rap known as crunk. Written and directed by Craig Brewer, this movie unfolds in the kind of awful heat that wilts any effort aimed at more than mere survival. Against all odds, DJay and his friends create a song. With Ludacris as a Memphis rapper returning to his home town after having made his fortune in the music business; Taryn Manning, Taraji P. Henson, and Paula Jai Parker as DJay's women; Anthony Anderson as a sound engineer; and D. J. Qualls as a skinny white guy who makes his living servicing concession machines but knows how to lay down crunk's bass-heavy tracks.—*D.D.* (7/11 & 18/05) (In wide release.)

KES

Ken Loach's fierce, heartbreaking 1969 film, about a poor lad named Billy (David Bradley) who finds a young kestrel falcon on a farm outside his Yorkshire mining town, conveys the restorative power of wild things with a beautiful astringency. Loach's cinematographer, the peerless Chris Menges, finds the poetry in the charged space between Billy and Kes, whether he's feeding her chopped-up bird bits or launching her into the air. But Loach doesn't linger on these gorgeous images; instead, he embeds them in the story of a working-class misfit at odds with his bullying brother and classmates and unsure about what to do when he leaves school. The movie reaches its emotional climax during an English class, when Billy, asked for a story about himself, tells how he trained his bird—and everyone who's seen him as a drag, including the teacher (Colin Welland, in a supremely winning performance), gets caught up in his excitement. No matter how grim the action, the movie never loses its rough humor and its glimmers of transcendence. Bradley is tremendous at expressing the pent-up anger of a put-upon runt, and he makes you feel that Billy will never lose the taste for freedom that Kes gives him.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; July 28.)

LAST DAYS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Empire 25 and Sunshine Cinema.)

MARCH OF THE PENGUINS

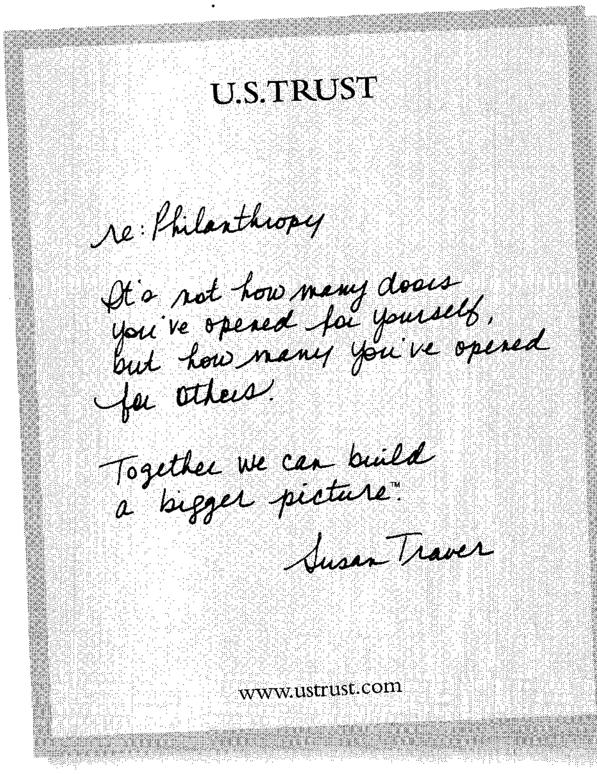
The French wildlife filmmaker Luc Jacquet spent more than a year chronicling the course of an emperor-penguin colony in Antarctica, and what he discovered was a touching, self-sacrificing ritual of parenthood. Trekking for miles through stunning ice-castle landscapes, Jacquet frames the penguins' mating cycle—from courtship through the birth and raising of their newborns—as a severe and forbidding ballet that demonstrates the true meaning of survival and determination. Narrated by Morgan Freeman.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

ME AND YOU AND EVERYONE WE KNOW

Miranda July, who functions not just as the writer and director of her début but also as the star, plays an artist named Christine—hazy, shy, benign, and very possibly deranged. She falls for a shoe salesman (John Hawkes), who is recently separated and supposed to be caring for his two young sons. The elder boy (Miles Thompson) is seduced, and half humiliated, by a pair of underage girls; the younger (Brandon Ratcliff) logs onto pornographic chat rooms on the Internet. There is much distance and disaffection on parade, and, for all the skill of the child actors, no amount of tidy payoffs can dispel the air of unpleasantness. In other areas, the movie is more relaxed, and some of the scruffy, shining cityscapes are a sorrowful joy to behold; whether you admire the outcome depends on whether you like the kind of picture in which the most spiritually urgent tribute is paid to a dead fish.—*A.L.* (6/27/05) (In wide release.)

MEMORIES OF MURDER

In this engrossing Korean police drama, about a pair of detectives on the hunt for a serial killer, one



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investigator (Song Kang-ho) is brutish and impulsive, the other (Kim Sang-kyung) quiet and methodical. As they become rivals—both are disappointed and frustrated by the other's methods—the film develops a unique tension. The director, Bong Joon-ho, allows the story to play as a languid police procedural (he doesn't sensationalize the murders), and his lulling camerawork gives the movie a dreamy, remembered atmosphere. The dramatic pull of the film is subtle and powerful as it gradually winds its way to an unconventional, haunting ending. In Korean.—*B.D.* (Cinema Village.)

MURDERBALL

The cutthroat sport of quadriplegic rugby, or "kill the man with the ball," is the focus of this energetic and riveting documentary by Dana Adam Shapiro and Henry Alex Rubin. The directors followed the young, tattooed jock Mark Zupan, the seasoned coach Joe Soares, and several other players on the U.S. and Canadian teams as they trained for the 2004 Paralympics, in Athens. With graceful editing and a minimal score, Shapiro and Rubin interweave the players' stories—their families, sex lives, physical achievements—with well-shot scenes of the action. The athletes play with fury, transferring their anger at their disabilities into incredible agility and power. The men seem at a loss when they attempt to fathom their situations, but their pure will allows them to keep moving.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

9 SONGS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center.)

STRANGE ILLUSION

The director Edgar G. Ulmer, who had worked as a production designer with F. W. Murnau and Fritz Lang, brought to his many American B pictures the cultural richness and the paranoid ambience of classic German cinema. In this 1945 film, Ulmer crafted a sharply Freudian modernization of "Hamlet," in which the young widow Virginia (Sally Eilers) is a pal to her hepcat teen-agers; the masterful interloper Brett (Warren William) is an unctuous predator with whom no girl is safe; and a psychiatrist's asylum is part of Brett's plot to eliminate his inquisitive stepson-to-be Paul (Jimmy Lydon), who, unlike the melancholy Dane, is studying criminology. Though the setting is wooden, Ulmer extracted a maximum of delirious effect from the few decent sets that his scant budget allowed. Watery reflections in a swimming pool turn Paul's girlfriend Lydia (Mary McLeod) into an Oedipal Ophelia, and Paul's view into a fenced-in garden from the asylum's dreadful leaded windows evokes the tragic price of the young hero's knowledge.—*Richard Brody* (Anthology Film Archives; Aug. 1.)

WAR OF THE WORLDS

When Steven Spielberg does digital special effects, they have an appalling weight—the heft and fling of huge masses hurled through space. At one point, Tom Cruise, playing an irresponsible dad with two children he must learn to protect, hurtles along the street right toward the camera, which is rapidly receding before him, and buildings and people on all sides disintegrate as the street itself puckers and bubbles like a fondue at the boil. In Spielberg's stark, horror-movie take on H. G. Wells's classic novel from 1898, there are no brilliant scientists from Caltech and no government authorities to cope with the alien invaders, as there were in older sci-fi-disaster movies. We are entirely alone. For an hour or so, as a physical realization of disaster, the picture is amazing, but then it runs out of gas, and we have time to wonder at a spectacle in which the aliens land and everyone dies so that Tom Cruise can grow up one more time. With Tim Robbins as a defiant, militia-minded basement dweller. The screenplay is by David Koepp and Josh Friedman.—*D.D.* (7/11 & 18/05) (In wide release.)

WEDDING CRASHERS

Jeremy (Vince Vaughn) and John (Owen Wilson), a pair of divorce mediators, spend their summer weekends rolling up to the weddings of people they don't know and becoming the life and the soul of the party. The director, David Dobkin, and the writers, Steve Faber and Bob Fisher, kick off with a hectic montage of good will, and the first twenty minutes are rabid with simple pleasure. Then Jeremy and John hit a swish society affair, in which the Treasury Secretary, William Cleary (Christopher Walken), is marrying off one of his daughters, leaving two more (Rachel McAdams and Isla Fisher) to be ogled by our heroes, whereupon the fizz—and the generosity—starts to leak away. Thank heaven for the leading men—especially Vaughn, a hopped-up Gary Cooper who shoots his mouth off with such scattershot brio that he flubs the occasional word, or picks an overheated one ("Erroneous! Erroneous!"), or forgets to pause for breath. This is a dumb-ass picture about dumb-ass men. Still, sometimes ten per cent of your brain is just enough.—*A.L.* (7/25/05) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BAD NEWS BEARS: In wide release. **DARK WATER:** In wide release. **THE ISLAND:** In wide release. **MAD HOT BALLROOM:** In wide release. **SARABAND:** Film Forum and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—New York premières. July 27-28 at 7 and 9: "Throwdown" (2004, Johnny To; in Cantonese). ♦ "New Filmmakers." July 27 at 8: "The Toybox" (2005, Paolo Sedazzari). ♦ "*The Onion* Presents." July 28 at 8: "Cabin Boy" (1994, Adam Resnick). ♦ Through Aug. 4: A tribute to Kino International, featuring Edgar G. Ulmer. July 29-Aug. 2 at 7: "Edgar G. Ulmer: The Man Off-Screen" (2004, Michael Palm). ♦ July 29 at 9: "The Man from Planet X" (1951). ♦ July 30 at 5: "Natalka Poltavka" (1937, Vasile Avramenko, M. J. Gann, and Ulmer). ♦ July 30 at 9: "The Black Cat" (1934). ♦ July 31 at 5:15: "Moon Over Harlem" (1939). ♦ July 31 at 9: "Bluebeard" (1944). ♦ Aug. 1 at 9: "Strange Illusion" (†). ♦ Aug. 2 at 9: "The Strange Woman" (1946). ♦ Special presentation. July 29 at 8: "Matilda Tone" (2005, Moira Tierney). ♦ "Essential Cinema." July 30 at 6: Short films by Georges Méliès (1904-09). ♦ July 30 at 8: Short films by Georges Méliès (1907-12). ♦ July 31 at 6: Short films by Marie Menken (1961-68). ♦ July 31 at 8: Short films by Marie Menken (1955-63).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Buster Keaton: Tempest in a Flat Hat." July 27 at 7: "Sherlock, Jr." (1924, Buster Keaton; silent) and "Cops" (1922, Keaton; silent). ♦ "After Vigo." July 28 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Kes" (†). ♦ "In Deppth," a Johnny Depp retrospective. July 29 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "What's Eating Gilbert Grape" (1993, Lasse Hallström). ♦ July 30-31 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Dead Man" (1995, Jim Jarmusch). ♦ "A New World: Shirley Clarke." Aug. 1 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Connection" (1962). ♦ Aug. 2 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Cool World" (1964).

BARD SUMMERSCAPE

The Milton and Sally Avery Center for the Arts, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. (845-758-7900)—Through Aug. 14: "William Wyler's America." July 28 at 7: "The Best Years of Our Lives" (1946). ♦ July 31 at 7: "The Heiress" (1949).

CINEMA VILLAGE

22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363)—Première. The film is twenty-four hours long. July 28 at 9 A.M.: "Federal" (2005, Mary Ellen Carroll).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Fiftieth-anniversary screening. July 27-28 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "The Seven Year Itch" (1955, Billy Wilder). ♦ Through Aug. 11: Special screening of new 35-mm. print. July 29-Aug. 2: "The Conformist" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Occupation of France Series." Aug. 2 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "This Land Is Mine" (1943, Jean Renoir).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." July 29-30: "Desperately Seeking Susan" (1985, Susan Seidelman). ♦ "Weekend Classics." July 30-31 at noon: "Early Spring" (1956, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Aug. 15: The films of Gregory La Cava. July 27 at 8: "The Half-Naked Truth" (1932). ♦ July 28 at 6 and July 30 at 2: "Big News" (1929). ♦ July 28 at 7:30: "Smart Woman" (1931). ♦

TABLES FOR TWO
THE STANTON SOCIAL

99 Stanton St. (212-995-0099)—Never mind the name. This isn't one of those reclaimed opium dens or massage parlors but a glossy interloper with booths that dwarf the tallest diners, grating music, and a design scheme with a glass-fronted, ceiling-high wine rack and cylindrical glass chandeliers that seems better suited to SoHo. The Stanton Social has a tapas philosophy—small plates, meant for sharing, sent out in no particular order—but the ingredients are pulled from so many different cuisines that it can feel out of control. The menu offers little guidance other than three small boxes that mark off a raw bar that includes pristine oysters, caviar, and an optional shot of top-shelf vodka; a "slider" section featuring a noble little Kobe-beef hamburger; and an ill-conceived comeback, the Stanton Social Beef Wellington, a dish of filet mignon wrapped in foie gras and pastry and made soggy by its mushroom sauce. There are high points among the other offerings, but it's hard to guess what will work together.

There are pleasing choices, such as a pizza with figs and truffle honey and a nice enough wasabi-pea-crusted wild salmon. The Shanghai-style French-onion-soup-filled dumplings are an elegant innovation, served in escargot trays. But there are also oysters Rockefeller, which are fried and salted beyond recognition, and chipotle shrimp with a disconcerting salsa made with feta cheese. The tiny paella cakes were good—packed with lobster chorizo and artichoke, each one topped with a mussel—but the lamb shank's presentation, a version of the do-it-yourself taco bar, is an exhausting complication.

It's better upstairs, away from the grim dining room, where the lounge décor makes it possible to think of the whole operation as a campy nineties theme bar. The maze of leather sofas and shared coffee tables is precarious (there seems to be glass breaking and silverware dropping constantly), but people are having fun and the music is nearly drowned out by the clamor of the flashy crowd. The food suddenly seems vindicated. Downstairs it's the most annoying dinner menu in the world. Upstairs it's the best bar menu of all time. (Open weekdays for dinner and weekends for brunch and dinner. Shared plates $6-$19.)

—*Owen Phillips*

July 29 at 6: "She Married Her Boss" (1935). ♦ July 29 at 8: "Private Worlds" (1935). ♦ July 30 at 4: "Stage Door" (1937). ♦ July 30 at 6: "Fifth Avenue Girl" (1939). ♦ July 30 at 8: "Primrose Path" (1940). ♦ July 31 at 3: "So's Your Old Man" (1926; silent). ♦ July 31 at 5: "Running Wild" (1927; silent). ♦ Aug. 1 at 6: "The Age of Consent" (1932). ♦ Aug. 1 at 7:30: "My Man Godfrey" (1936).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Outdoor Cinema (at Socrates Sculpture Park, on Broadway at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City). July 27 at 7: "Take Care of My Cat" (2001, Jae-eun Jeong; in Korean). ♦ Repertory nights. July 29 at 7:30 and July 30-31 at 6:30: "Last Tango in Paris" (1972, Bernardo Bertolucci; in French and English). ♦ Through Aug. 21: A Raoul Walsh retrospective. July 30-31 at 2: "High Sierra" (1941). ♦ July 30 at 4: "They Died with Their Boots On" (1941). ♦ July 31 at 4: "Desperate Journey" (1942).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. July 29-30: "Evil Dead II" (1987, Sam Raimi).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Scanners: The 2005 New York Video Festival." July 27 at 4 and July 30 at 6: "Through a Glass Darkly," a series of video shorts (2004-05). ♦ July 27 at 6:30 and July 31 at 9: "Cop Festival," a series of short Japanese cop-genre films. ♦ July 27 at 9 and July 29 at 3: "Reflections of Evil" (2002, Damon Packard). ♦ July 28 at 4 and July 29 at 6: "Animate!," a series of recent animated short films. ♦ July 28 at 6: Music videos selected by Armond White. ♦ July 28 at 9: "The Battle of Orgreave" (2001, Mike Figgis). ♦ July 29 at 8:30: "Pink Ribbon" (2004, Kenjirô Fujii; in Japanese). ♦ July 29 at 11: "The Glamorous Life of Sachiko Hanai a.k.a. Horny Home Tutor: Teacher's Love Juice" (2003, Mitsuru Meike; in Japanese). ♦ July 30 at 2: "Aristide: And the Endless Revolution" (2005, Nicolas Rossier; in English, Creole, and French). ♦ July 30 at 4: "Xang Ban Xi: The 8 Modelworks" (2005, Yang Ting Yuen; in Mandarin). ♦ July 30 at 10:30: "Cop Festival Reloaded," more short Japanese cop-genre films. ♦ July 31 at 1: "Far as the Eye Can See," a series of short films (2003-05). ♦ July 31 at 3: "Robert Frank: 20 Years with a Video Camera, Program 1" (1985-94; Robert Frank). ♦ July 31 at 6: "Robert Frank: 20 Years with a Video Camera, Program 2" (1996-2004; Robert Frank).

READINGS AND TALKS

"LEAVES OF GRASS"
Wednesdays this month, the Poetry Society of America and the Brooklyn Historical Society have been celebrating the sesquicentennial of Whitman's masterpiece with a marathon reading, by local poets, of the 1855 edition in its entirety. The final evening of this series features Nick Flynn, Mary Karr, Pablo Medina, Dennis Nurske, and Sapphire. (128 Pierrepont St. 718-222-4111. July 27 at 6:30.)

HA JIN
The novelist offers an alfresco reading from his latest work, "War Trash," in Central Park. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777. July 27 at 7:30.)

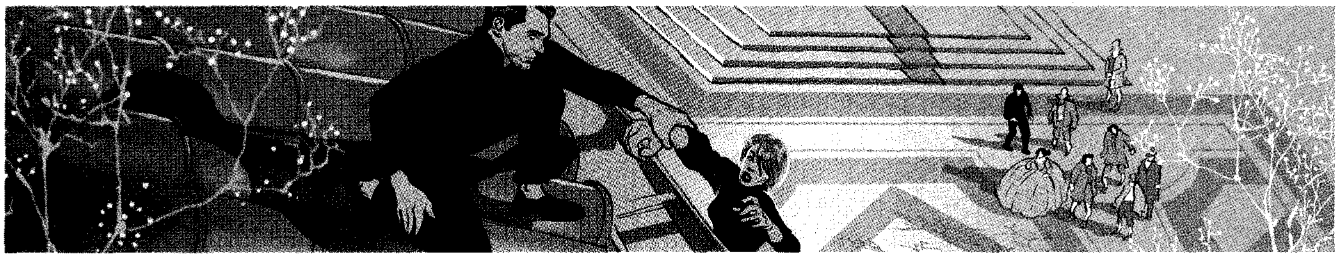
MATTHEW VESCOVO
The artist and author of the comical how-to guide "InstructoArt" presents an illustrated lecture about that book and his newest creation, "The Life and Death of Bling Bling." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary. July 28 at 7.)

D. H. MELHEM
The poet offers selections from her latest collection, "New York Poems." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary. July 28 at 7:30.)

MORE "LEAVES OF GRASS"
The Broadway actors Cherry Jones and Brian F. O'Byrne read from Whitman's poetry at St. Peter's Church. (Citicorp Center, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. July 29 at noon. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

GOVERNORS ISLAND
The patch of land separated from Brooklyn by the Buttermilk Channel and first settled by the Dutch in 1637 was home to an Army base from 1800 to 1966 and then to the country's largest Coast Guard base. Since that base closed, in 1997, the island has been in limbo. This summer, however, New Yorkers can explore a portion of the island, thanks to Saturday ferry service. The Statue of Liberty and the skyscrapers of lower Manhattan provide an incongruous backdrop for Georgian houses and state-of-the-art, post-Revolutionary War coastal defenses (Fort Jay and Castle Williams). There's also a looming hospital and barracks, a Super 8 Motel, and a deserted elementary school. It's a fully furnished ghost town; one nearly expects to see children walking through the neighborhood on their way home for lunch. (Saturdays from 10 to 5:30; ferries leave the Battery Maritime Building on South St. on the hour until 3. Through Sept. 10. Guided tours are also available Tuesdays through Fridays through Sept. 3. For more information, call 212-440-2202 or visit www.nps.gov/gois.)



TOMER HANUKA

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
LAST STOP
Aug. 17-28

The busy young director Will Frears closes out the Williamstown Theatre Festival with William Inge's "Bus Stop," starring Elizabeth Banks, as Cherie (the role made famous by Marilyn Monroe), and Logan Marshall-Green. (413-597-3400.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
BACK TO STRAUSS
Sept. 7

The New York City Opera, which opened last year with Strauss's "Daphne," offers another of the composer's late jewels, "Capriccio," to begin its new fall season, with Pamela Armstrong singing the role of the Countess. George Manahan conducts. (212-721-6500.)

ART
VIETNAM REVISITED
Sept. 13-Jan. 8, 2006

"Destinations for the New Millennium," a survey of recent work by Dinh Q. Lê, will be on view at the Asia Society starting Sept. 13. Around New York, the Vietnamese artist is known mostly for his woven photocollages, which blend documentary images of his homeland with movie stills; here, he'll also be presenting an installation of satellites and mirrors, some sculptures, and the series of small postcardlike works that gives the show its title. (212-517-2742.)

NIGHT LIFE
THE ARCADE FIRE
Sept. 15

The indie-rock collective Arcade Fire, which made a big splash in the city last fall with sold-out shows at the CMJ Festival, returns as one of the headliners of this year's gathering of up-and-coming bands. The Montreal-based group plays SummerStage in Central Park on Sept. 15, insuring that there'll be room for more than a few of their new fans. (212-307-7171.)

MOVIES
HITCH'S BEST MAN
Sept. 16-25

Alfred Hitchcock said that Cary Grant was "the only actor I ever loved in my whole life," and it showed. BAM Rose Cinemas will screen the four peerless suspense thrillers that the two made together between 1941 and 1959: "Suspicion," "Notorious," "To Catch a Thief," and "North by Northwest." (718-636-4100.)

It's time to think outside the barrel.

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Education BP's A+ for Energy program has awarded $4 million in grants and scholarships to 4,000 California teachers over the last two years. BP supports energy education throughout the country, from a traveling classroom that teaches alternative energy, to the Solar Decathlon in Washington, D.C.

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
ROE V. ROVE

As of last Monday, when *Time* and *Newsweek* hit the stands with Karl Rove on their covers, the elements were in place for a good old-fashioned second-term White House scandal wallow. In Rove himself—baby-faced hatchet man, architect of the political career of George W. Bush, possessor of one of the most admiring nicknames Bush has ever bestowed (Boy Genius) and one of the most pungent (Turd Blossom), deputy chief of the White House staff—the story had a villain, who, like all the best villains, came equipped with vassals acclaiming him a hero. It had a silent, remorseless lawman in Patrick Fitzgerald, the special counsel tasked with investigating the unauthorized and possibly unlawful disclosure of the identity of a covert C.I.A. operative. It had a colorful supporting cast, including the spy herself (an attractive blonde whose neighbors thought she was just another working mom), her husband (a flamboyant ex-diplomat whose secret mission and subsequent apostasy set the stage for skulduggery), and a *Times* reporter jailed for her refusal to talk. Rove's participation in the leak, categorically denied by the White House for almost two years, had become a firmly established fact, though its extent and legality remained in dispute. President Bush, questioned by reporters, promised that "if someone committed a crime, they will no longer work in my Administration," thereby rendering inoperative his earlier pledge to fire anyone "involved" in the leak. And the budding scandal had a larger meaning, as a surrogate for the more serious, and more muted, debate over America's faltering war in Iraq.

That was Monday. On Tuesday, Bush went on prime-time television and announced his choice to replace Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court: a fifty-year-old federal appellate judge by the generic all-American name of John Roberts. The timetable had been moved up, the conservative activist Paul Weyrich told *The Hill*, a Washington weekly, "in order to get the Rove story and other things off the front page." Next to the President under the East Room lights were two adorable, fidgeting children; their accomplished, smiling mother; and their father, the nominee—kindly of gaze, square of jaw, dimpled of chin. Bulletproof of résumé, too, it looks like. Barring the revelation of some improbable depravity, John G. Roberts, Jr., will be confirmed; barring actuarial anomalies, he can be expected to serve until the twenty-forties. Moreover, he will be confirmed politely, after thorough questioning and civil debate. There will be no filibuster this time.

Roberts's confirmation will be eased by the narrowness of his life experience, which has taken place within the confines of a disciplined and unidirectional legal career. As a lawyer, he has argued many cases and written many briefs, but they were always on behalf of a client, whether a person or a corporation or the United States government. And lawyers, whose professional duty is to advocate, are granted the privilege of saying things they don't necessarily believe. Roberts has had more leeway during his two years on the bench, but appeals judges are bound by Supreme Court precedent. Supreme Court Justices *make* Supreme Court precedent.

Democrats are taking a certain solace in the nominee's gentle temperament. He is not, it appears, a hater; nor is he even a particularly rigid ideologue. Unlike Justices Scalia and Thomas, Roberts does not project a sense of resentful beleaguerment—the kind of resentment expressed last Thursday in an e-mail to supporters of the National Republican

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

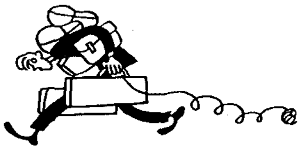
Senatorial Committee, over the signature of Senator Elizabeth Dole. "The liberal Democrat leadership," she warned, "wants to do everything in their power to slow down the confirmation process, so their most powerful special interest allies can spend millions upon millions to smear Supreme Court nominee John Roberts' solid legal credentials and good character." In truth, no one is smearing Roberts, and no one is questioning his credentials and character. On the contrary, "Democrat" senators have amply praised both, while adding that credentials and character are not the beginning and end of the story. (If they were, Bush might as well have nominated Laurence Tribe.) To all appearances, Roberts is not far from the sort of nominee Senator Edward Kennedy had urged on Bush: a "mainstream conservative," in the O'Connor mold. Even if Roberts is more conservative than O'Connor is now, his relative position on the spectrum, as far as one can tell, is roughly what hers was in 1981, when she was appointed. In the political climate change of the intervening quarter century, however, the mainstream has migrated eastward.

Many of the Democrats' "powerful special interest allies," notably in the abortion-rights movement, are raising alarms about Roe v. Wade. The core of the abortion ruling is not in immediate danger; even if O'Connor's support becomes Roberts's opposition, Roe will still command a majority of one. The truth, though, is that the next few years will be hard ones for reproductive freedom, especially among the red-state poor and young. Roe or no Roe, Roberts or no Roberts, a woman with money will be able to get a safe and legal abortion, even if she has to travel to another state to get one. But any Bush-appointed Justice, whatever his or her stand on Roe, is likely to endorse ever more restrictive state laws calculated to intimidate, inconvenience, or otherwise prevent young women who want or need abortions from getting them. If, after another couple of Bush appointments, the Court does strike down Roe, the result would, of course, be worse—abortion would be banned outright in a score of states—but the political energy in this seemingly endless national struggle would quickly pass from the pro-life to the pro-choice side. The more immediate dangers, from the moderate-to-liberal point of view, are in areas where O'Connor provided the fifth vote. If Roberts turns out to be as conservative as Bush's rightmost supporters hope, then affirmative action, secularism, patients' rights, and all manner of federal regulation from campaign-finance controls to environmental protection will be in serious trouble.

Roberts's confirmation will be a bitter pill for Democrats, but it is a pill they have known since last November that they would have to swallow. Their bitterness is deepened by the conviction that Bush won the 2004 election in spite of his domestic policies, including his likely judicial choices; he won it because he was the post-9/11 incumbent, and he was the post-9/11 incumbent because, in 2000, the Court whose members he now appoints appointed him. All the same, there is at least a possibility, however slim, that Roberts will surprise. The nomination has been hailed as a masterstroke, but it is also a confession of weakness. Bush's popularity is at a low ebb; his plan to privatize Social Security is failing; his war and his budget are in chaos. And by Friday the troubles of Karl Rove were back on the front page.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

THEME AND VARIATIONS
BAG CHECK



Scene: Subway entrance, Grand Central, 9 A.M.*, Friday. Players: Officers Boyd, Ramson, Kwong, and Morales. Assorted citizens and photographers.*

"Exit to your left."

"Hello, Miss, going up the stairs: stay to your left."

"Only thing I can say is, people feel safe. Ninety-nine to ninety-seven per cent approve, I'd say."

"Gym clothes."

"Stay to your left. Excuse me, sir. Hello. Use the escalators to exit."

"Check my bag?"

"Thank you."

"You're quite welcome."

"Have a good day."

"How about the other backpack?"

"More clothing and books."

"My name is Edward Pleasant. I'm an opera singer."

"Excuse me, Miss, can I have your name? I'm shooting for the A.P."

"What's going on is the cops are pulling over every fifteenth person. Unless they look real suspicious."

"Excuse me, we've never been here. We've never ridden the subway. Can we just use money?"

"Unzip the bag, please."

"Clothes and a sleeping bag."

"Man, this one took forever to close."

"Excuse me, you gotta move your notepad. It's in the shot."

"It sucks, but I guess it's gotta happen."

"Please use the escalator to exit."

"Which train do I take to get to Penn Station?"

"Can you open your bag, please?"

"O.K."

"Ah, laptop."

"Good morning. Want me to open it?"

"What do you have in here?"

"All sorts of stuff. It's all good."

"We're looking for wires, powder, messy chemicals. People nervous, shaking."

"Excuse me, is there any way you can get your notebook out of the frame?"

"A lot of computers. I have to make sure the wires aren't cut. Even a cut wire doesn't mean it's a bomb."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just hurry up."

"A lot of people like him, running late, frustrated. Not being aware of what's going on in the outside world."

"My wallet and my shoes."

"Clothing, gifts."

"Books, cell phone, water."

"Sometimes they don't remember what they put in their bags."

"It's books. Check it?"

"Please use the escalator to exit."

"Please use the ex—the escalator to exit."

"Escalator, escalator, escalator."

"No, he did pick me. My lunch, my hair dryer, my wallet."

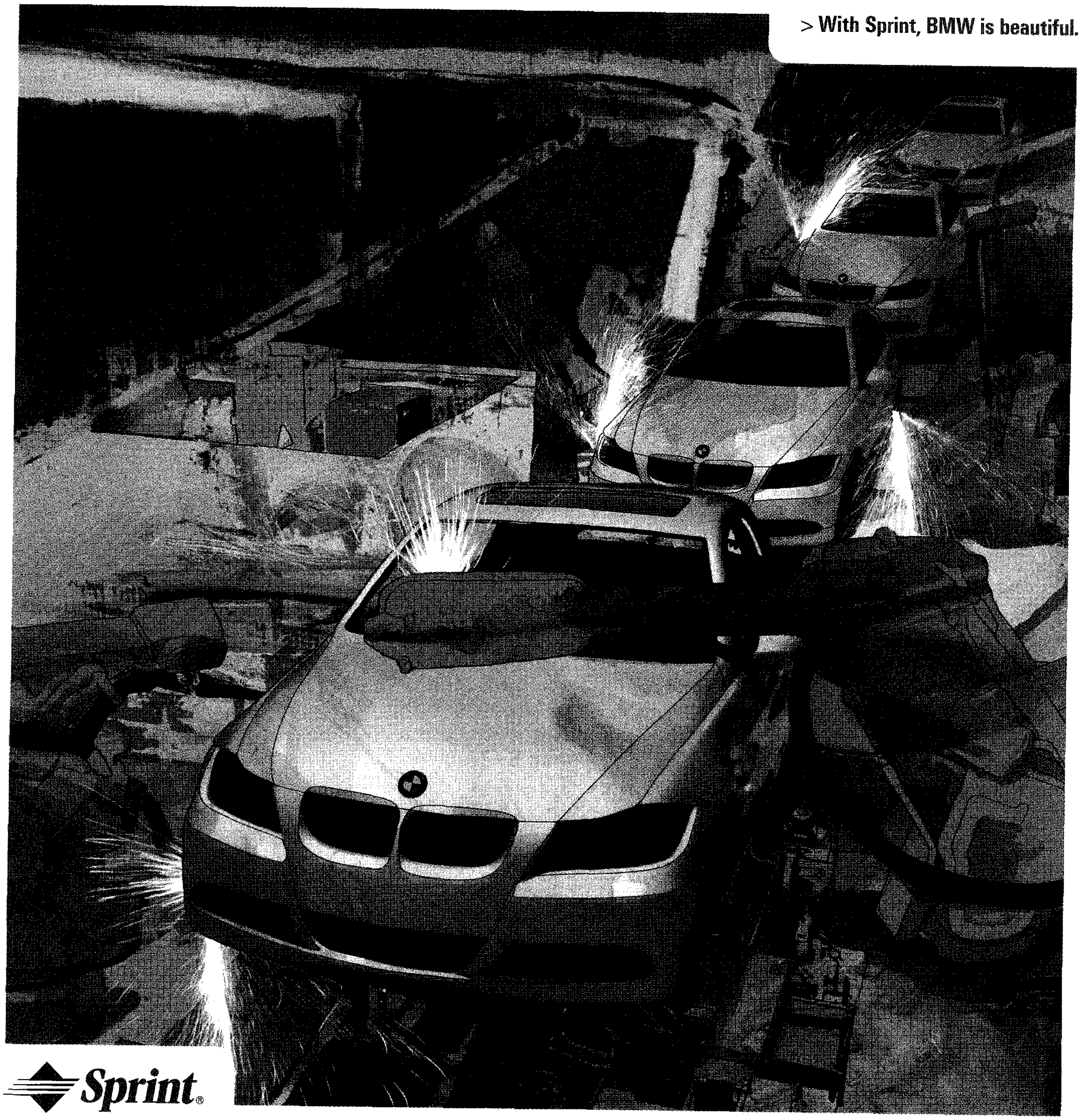
"The other thing is if they're afraid of opening their own bag."

"I can't believe it. I went to high school with her."

"Computer, paperwork. 'Harry Potter.' Ha, ha, ha. Oh, that's it? Thank you."

"I'll relieve you right now. The master is *back*. You been slacking?"

"Whaddaya got, lunch in there? I got the table if you got lunch."



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"Chips."

"Chips? Go ahead."

"Whaddaya got, lunch? Here's a little tip. I like chocolate-chip cookies."

"Good morning, sir. That bag looks a little heavy there. You're gonna break my table here."

"Please use the escalator to exit."

"A Yankees fan, huh? All right!"

"You got a water there, huh."

"A gas mask. No, I'm kidding. You guys are doing a great job."

"Excuse me, sir, I'm from the BBC."

"I'm gonna have to take the lunch."

"It's a salad."

"Salad? I don't eat salad. Good morning. Do you have a salad, too?"

"Got my train pillow."

"Hi, I'm Scout."

"I like the name Scout."

"If I'd been a boy, my parents would've named me Atticus."

"Morning, sir, how you doing?"

"What's up, doc?"

"I don't want to be filmed."

"She doesn't want to be filmed."

"I don't want to be filmed."

"Ah, a man who digs Bruce Lee. All right!"

"Thank you."

"Enjoy the rest of the day."

"Any goodies in here? How you doing?"

"So far, so good. I'm not planning to blow myself to kingdom come."

"What's this?"

"That's my son's birthday present. He turns twenty-one in two days. And that's my schlep bag."

"Tell your son Happy Birthday. Hi, could you unzippa the bag, please."

"Sir, how do you feel about your bag being checked?"

"Great."

"Please use the escalator to exit."

"It's ten."

"We're outta here."

"We're done?"

"We're done. Unless you wanna stay."

—*Nick Paumgarten*

WIND ON CAPITOL HILL

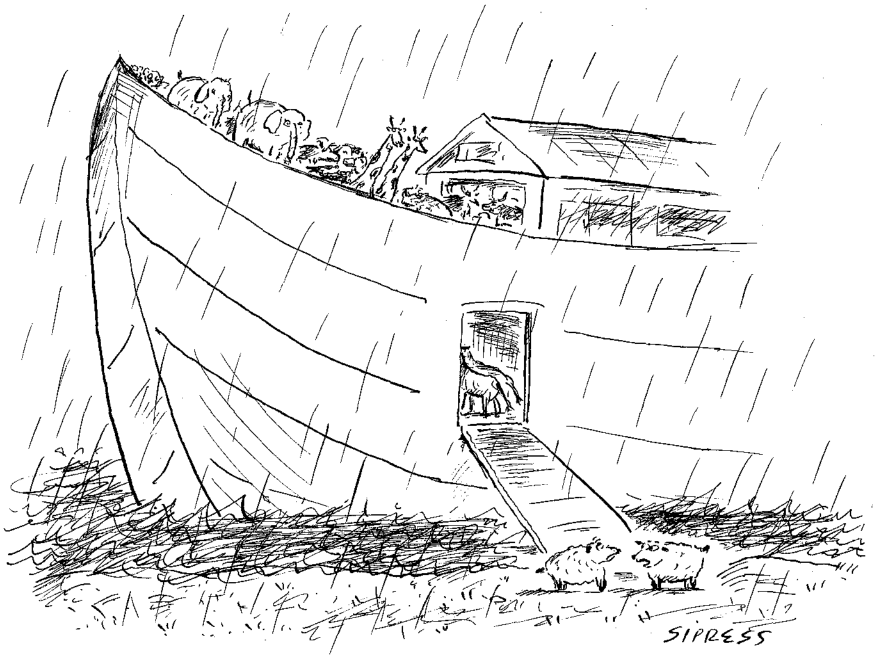
THE BRITNEY OPTION

In May, the Senate's eleventh-hour compromise on filibusters led to a lot of talk about a return to civility. The President's nomination, last week, of John G. Roberts to fill the upcoming vacancy on the Supreme Court may change that. Advocacy groups on both sides of the political fence are again cranking up their phone-bank operations and e-mail campaigns, as they get ready for a showdown. One organization, People for the American Way, is trying something new: an initiative to coördinate thousands of simultaneous calls to the Senate by alerting its members via cell-phone text messaging, a medium more generally associated with preteen flirting or casting votes for "American Idol" than with progressive activism. The group is calling the operation Mass Immediate Response, or MIR, though at least one political observer has dubbed it the Britney Option.

MIR is the creation of Jed Alpert, a wireless-entertainment entrepreneur, who originally developed the application, in 2001, for a cross-promotional marketing campaign by the electronics company Samsung and the pop star Britney Spears. At a cost of $19.95 for three months, tens of thousands of the singer's fans (many of them, it turned out, men no longer in their teens) signed up to receive several text messages a week, supposedly from Britney. By selecting a link embedded in each message, subscribers would be led to a recorded message, either from Spears herself ("Hey, it's Britney Spears. Can I just tell you, I had a blast at your party—seriously, your friends are really cool. Next time I have a party, you're totally invited") or from one of the members of her entourage, among them her personal assistant, Alicia, and her bodyguard, Big Rob.

The novel aspect of the technology is its ability to deliver customized messages to registered cell-phone users, based on such criteria as the user's address, date of birth, and, in some cases, musical tastes. For participants in the Britney Spears promotion, this meant getting to hear Spears read their horoscopes every month. The horoscopes, Alpert explained the other day, were drawn up by "experienced, highly respected astrologers, based in Chicago—and half of that statement is true." They were also short and simple, and they often included an injunction to go for it. Spears recorded only twelve different horoscopes, but, Alpert said, "a complex algorithm" allowed them to be circulated among the different signs of the zodiac for a year.

At the height of the filibuster debate last spring, Alpert was volunteering on the phone bank at People for the American Way. One night, after hours of leaving messages on answering machines, being asked to call back later, and getting trapped in long conversations with lonely radicals in the Midwest, he was struck by the inefficiency of person-to-person organizing over landlines. He realized that his wireless technology could be used to instantly



"We'll feel pretty silly if it's downgraded to a tropical storm."

mobilize thousands of activists, though they would have to be sorted by where they lived and who represented them in Washington, rather than by the alignment of the planets at the time of their birth. Alpert sold People for the American Way on the idea, and he is now shopping the technology around to other progressive organizations. (He recently changed its name from W.F.X., which stands for Wireless Fan Access, to Politext.)

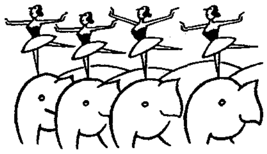
Last week, on the morning after the Roberts nomination, People for the American Way was ready with its first MIR campaign. Several thousand text messages went out to the cell phones of the group's participating members, urging them to call their senators (by clicking an embedded link) and tell them to "hold judgment until facts are in!"

It is unlikely that Spears will be involved in P.F.A.W.'s campaign in any capacity. "I'm not sure how closely Britney has been following this issue," Alpert said. Some armchair strategists think that this could be a mistake. Astrological forecasts and breathy pep talks may not shed any light on the High Court nominee's judicial philosophy, but they could provide signposts for the months ahead.

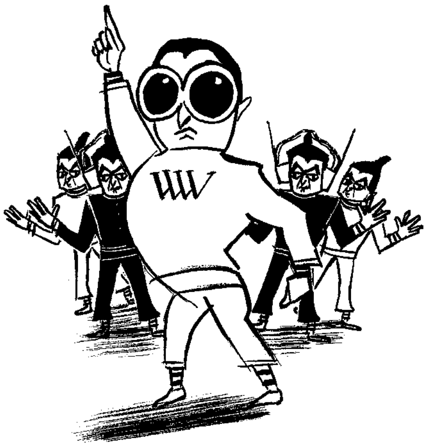
For instance, Spears seems to predict that Roberts will move smoothly through the confirmation process. "That thing that has you so worried will work out, so don't worry too much," she counsels the Judge—and everyone else born under the sign of Aquarius—in her W.F.X. horoscope for the month of October, when the next Supreme Court session begins. And she offers Roberts a word of advice about the new job. "It looks like the flowers might be blooming for you, but the garden needs some T.L.C.," she says. "Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty. That's what works."

—*Adam Green*

DEPT. OF MULTITASKING
ONE-MAN SHOW



Early on in Roald Dahl's book "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," Grandpa Joe lets Charlie in on a secret: late at night, an army of tiny "secret workers"—Oompa Loompas—can be seen plugging away behind Mr. Wonka's gates. Last year, a similar air of enigma surrounded Pinewood Studios, near London, where the director Tim Burton was filming an adaptation of the book. Unbeknownst to the world's Oompa Loompa watchers, he had hired the actor Deep Roy to play every last one of the workers. (Mel Stuart, in his 1971 version, used ten dwarfs.) In a series of Busby Berkeleyesque production numbers, Roy, with the help of digital technology, is refracted into a sort of kaleidoscopic one-man corps de ballet. Inscrutable hybrids of Punjab and Marvin the Martian, their hair sculpted to resemble chocolate kisses, Roy's Oompa Loompas are the film's comic engine. An uninformed moviegoer could be forgiven for wondering, in the manner of Charlie, "But, Grandpa, *who*, *who* is Mr. Burton using to do all the work in the factory?"



Oompa Loompas

"My family had to sign releases; I didn't tell anybody," Roy recalled the other day from his home in Santa Monica. "But then word leaked out that there's only one man playing all Loompas." One man, all Loompas: it takes some getting used to. But Roy, who was born in Nairobi to Indian parents (he's descended from a maharaja) and has been acting for more than thirty years (his résumé includes roles in "Planet of the Apes," "Return of the Jedi," and "Poltergeist II"), was up to the job. As the Loompas, he sings, disco-dances, smashes guitars, and swims synchronically; he's a chef, a barber, a shrink, a secretary, and exactly one hundred and twenty-one other things. "People were asking me who were going to be the other Oompas, and I said to them, 'I don't know,'" Roy recalled.

The idea, originally, was that Roy would have some help either from child actors or from what he called "some small, special ladies." When that didn't work (fatigue and bustlines, respectively), Roy volunteered to take on their duties. "I said, 'Let me do it all myself.' They said, 'Are you sure?' And I said, 'Yeah. It's easy!'"

Actually, becoming all the Loompas was an exhaustive process. First, Burton called for a screen test. Roy, whose previous dancing experience was limited to birthday parties and weddings—"You know, one has a couple of drinks and goes on the floor"—quickly put together an act. "I picked 'It's Not Unusual,' and then I did the little hop that Tom Jones does and moved my hips," Roy said. "Tim loved it. He came up to me and said, 'Did you know that I used Tom Jones in "Edward Scissorhands"?'"

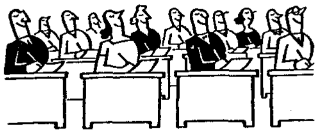
Next, Roy began a Wonkian regimen of excessive moderation. "They put me on a special diet," he said. "I love beer, but beer is full of carbs and all that. They measured me every week, so that I didn't gain weight." (He started out at four feet four inches and seventy-four pounds.) Every day at 6 A.M., he practiced Pilates with a trainer. It took six months of fourteen-hour days to complete the filming of Roy's four song-and-dance extravaganzas. Burton calls him "the hardest-working man in show business."

Roy's multifaceted performance has caused some controversy among his peers. In 2004, in a Los Angeles paper, Eugene Pidgeon, an actor and writer turned labor activist for dwarf performers, published a manifesto entitled "Little People's Progress." In it, he addressed two key problems: a dearth of decent roles for little people, and the threat to their livelihoods posed by animation technology. "My argument is that if you're going to computer-generate us out of roles that we have traditionally taken, you have to provide others," Pidgeon said over the phone from Hollywood. "Oompas, trolls, elves, cupids are just going to disappear en masse."

A few months ago, after a year of agitating, Pidgeon persuaded the Screen Actors Guild to ratify his proposal for an advocacy committee, to be called the Short-Statured Actors Forum. "For every Deep Roy, there are a hundred and fifty of us who are forced to do wacked-out shit on 'The Man Show,'" he said. "I'd like Tim Burton to tell me to my face what is the benefit of hiring one dwarf actor and computer-generating him when he could hire seven." He continued, "We're standing at the gate and we're raising our hands and saying, 'Pick me!' And then Tim Burton comes out and says, 'I'm sorry, guys, go on home. We've got this machine that can do all your jobs.'"

—*Lauren Collins*

DEPT. OF EDUCATION
THE GOOD NEWS

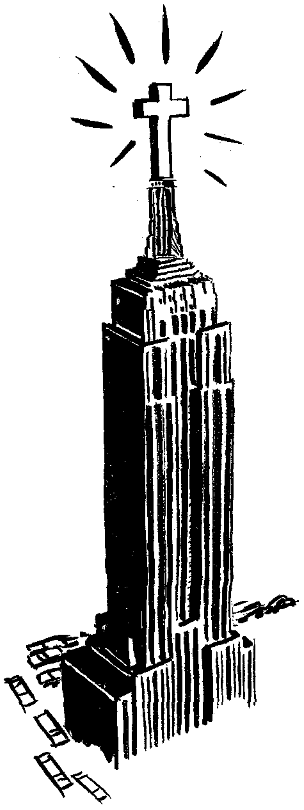


In 1882, at the back of a theatre on West Twenty-third Street, the pastor A. B. Simpson founded the Missionary Training Institute, North America's first Bible college. In 1897, he moved it thirty miles north, to Nyack. And so it came to pass that for the next hundred and one years, as evangelical colleges sprouted up everywhere else, New York City, the town with something for everybody, did not have one of its own.

This deficiency was corrected in 1998, when the King's College, formerly of Belmar, New Jersey, and Briarcliff Manor, New York, took up residence in midtown Manhattan. Having shut down four years earlier, it was resurrected by Campus Crusade for Christ, an international organization of collegiate proselytizers, and installed in the Empire State Building.

An evangelical college: what a curious addition to the tower's giant roster of misfit tenants. (There are eight hundred and fifty in all.) The directory in the lobby (the names running from Aarons on through Hot Legs, Human Rights Watch, Hutspah Shirts, and down to Zysmant) is a testament to the persistence, in an ever-changing world, of hosiery, discount travel, good intentions, and self-employment. The King's College is on the fifteenth floor. (Among the other ventures listed there: a book review, a printing shop, an acupuncturist named Gang Wang, and an accountant named Irvin Schmutter.) Across the hall, for now, is Oxford Slacks, but, as if fulfilling a kind of manifest destiny, the King's College, whose administrative offices are in a suite once occupied by Oxford Shirts, will take the lease this fall.

Last week was a big one for King's: the state's Board of Regents, a sort of Jedi Council for the galaxy of Albany, was scheduled to vote on whether to extend the college's accreditation—to affirm its existence, really. In March, the board, citing academic and financial concerns, granted it a mere one-year extension, rather than the five-year accreditation that an advisory panel had recommended. King's officials smelled anti-Christian bias. In conservative publications and on Christian radio stations, they accused the regents, and one in particular, John Brademas, the former president of New York University, of singling out King's for undue scrutiny. "Blue-state bigotry," Stanley Kurtz wrote in the *National Review Online*. The regents maintained that religion and politics had nothing to do with it. The college, meanwhile, raised money by suggesting otherwise. Last Thursday, though, the regents voted to approve the five-year accreditation, after all. Stan Oakes, the president of the college, said, "We feel vindicated, and we think we've been subjected to an abuse of power."

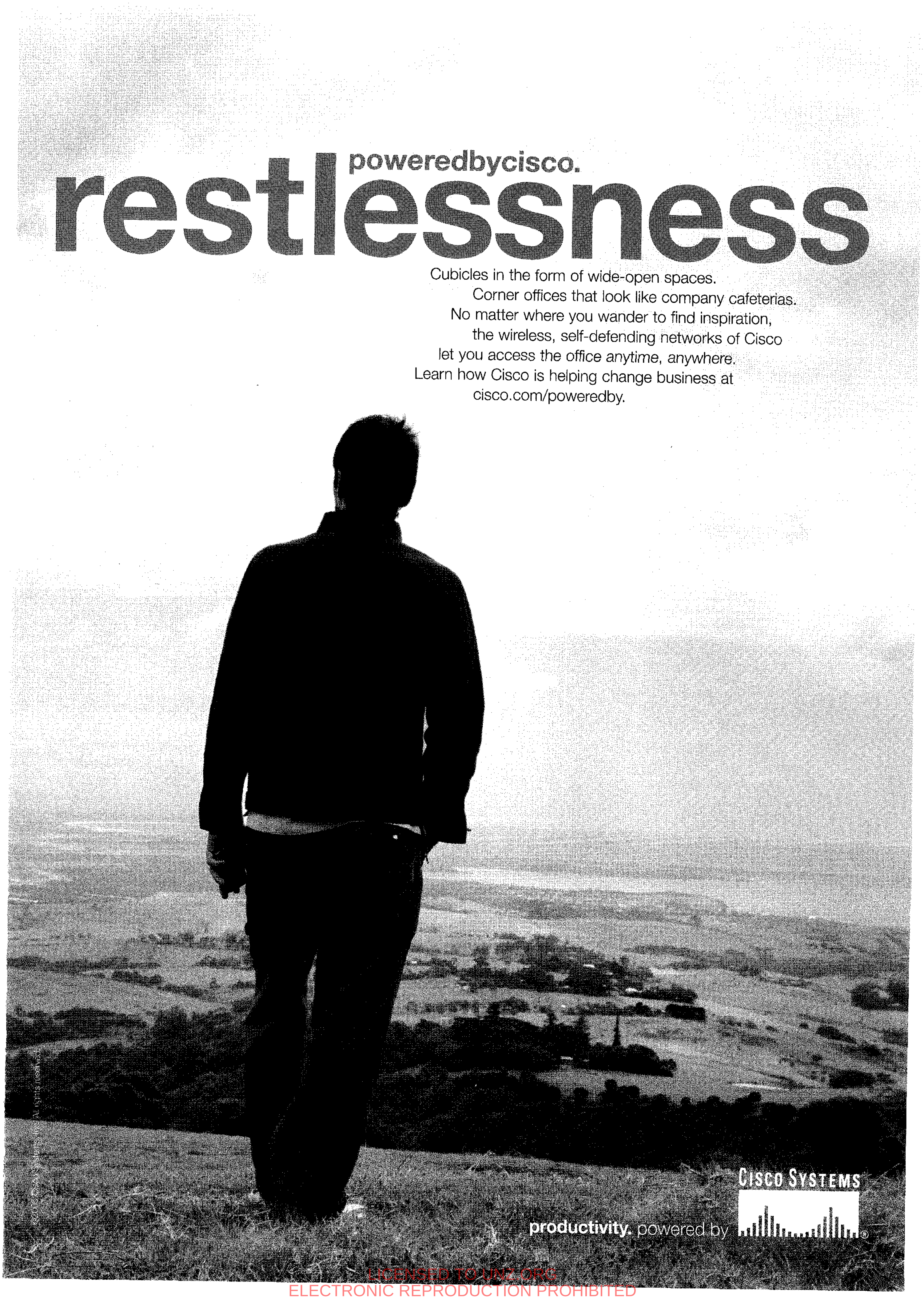


Two days before the regents' vote, Oakes was in his office, making the case for King's. He was dressed in a blue shirt, a tie, khakis, and caramel-colored boat shoes. He is slightly Rovian in aspect, stature, and manner: well padded, self-assured, playful. He is fond of quoting the philosophers. He became a Christian thirty-five years ago, while at the University of Minnesota. He joined the Campus Crusade, for which he assembled networks of academics with evangelical leanings. He and his wife live near Sutton Place and attend services at Calvary/St. George's, on East Sixteenth Street. To convey how he felt about being both a diehard conservative and an evangelical Christian in Manhattan, he told the old joke about Sammy Davis, Jr., boarding a bus: "'Get to the back of the bus,' the driver says. 'But I'm Jewish,' Davis says. 'Then get off,' the driver says."

The college's goal, Oakes says, is to educate students for national leadership. There are two hundred and fifty students, from thirty states and twenty countries. They study politics, philosophy, and economics, and attempt, as Oakes put it, "to bring sophistication to the defining questions: marriage, family, when to go to war, does poverty cause crime. You ask these questions in a different way when trillions or hundreds of billions of dollars are put behind the answers to them." The classrooms are belowground in the building's lower lobby, along with a "leadership center," a canteen, and a small library. (The public library, of course, is just up the street.) The students live a few blocks away in one-bedroom apartments, three or four to a room. They are also grouped in nine "houses," which compete with one another and are named (by the students) for various eminences: Winston Churchill, Sojourner Truth, C. S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Elizabeth I, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher. "I like them," Oakes said. "But I don't know that I would've chosen all of these."

When Oakes gives a tour to prospective students, he likes to finish by taking them up to the observation deck. He has a special pass that allows him to cut the line. Last week, he headed there, to show a native the view. "Jesus," the native said, stepping out onto the deck and peering down over the boomerang rooftops of Stuyvesant Town. It had been a while.

—*Nick Paumgarten*



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ANNALS OF LAW

SEX AND THE SUPREMES

Why the Court's next big battle may be about gay rights.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

There have been occasions in the history of the Supreme Court when simple professional excellence, more than any grittier consideration, was enough to propel a lawyer onto the bench. Ethnic and geographic balance, as well as a measure of ideological suitability, played some part in, say, Herbert Hoover's selection of Benjamin Nathan Cardozo, in 1932, or Dwight D. Eisenhower's choice of John M. Harlan, in 1955, but it was possible, too, to see these nominations as ratifications of a national consensus about lawyerly credentials. George W. Bush's designation of John G. Roberts, Jr., can be seen as following this tradition. Though he is only fifty years old, Roberts, who graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law School, has been a clerk to two eminent judges (the late Henry J. Friendly, of the United States Court of Appeals in New York, and William Rehnquist, Roberts's likely future colleague), a lawyer in the Reagan White House, Principal Deputy Solicitor General under the first President Bush, and a leading private lawyer before the Justices. Since 2003, he has served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

But the transformation of the politics surrounding the Court suggests another, less noble reason for the President's choice. Roberts's shimmering résumé reveals everything except what really matters when one considers the potential impact of a Justice. More than ever before, the Supreme Court has become the national arbiter of cultural issues, and the last years of the Rehnquist Court have been characterized by a moderate consensus that has largely reflected the centrist views of the Justice whom Roberts would replace, Sandra Day O'Connor. On these issues Roberts has said little. When he was Deputy Solicitor General for the first President Bush, he argued for overturning Roe v. Wade, which legalized abortion. Yet in written responses during the confirmation hearings for the D.C. Circuit, in 2003, he said, "I do not believe that it is proper to infer a lawyer's personal views from the positions that lawyer may advocate on behalf of a client in litigation." He also described Roe as "binding precedent," although a Supreme Court Justice is far less bound by precedent than any lower-court judge.

In light of his argument against Roe, and because he was nominated by Bush, many reproductive-rights groups have rushed to condemn Roberts. For the same reasons, many conservatives have embraced him. According to Jay Sekulow, who runs the conservative American Center for Law and Justice, which was founded by the televangelist and onetime Presidential candidate Pat Robertson, "The President said he wanted a Justice in the mold of Scalia and Thomas"—Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas—"and I think that's what he's got with John Roberts." But Roberts's paper trail, which is more extensive than is generally believed, suggests a more cautious assessment. His own words appear to support the view, expressed by many who know him, that he does not hold strong political beliefs. "I know one of the things that frustrates very much the judges who are on [the D.C. Circuit], all of whom are very hardworking," he said in his 2003 confirmation hearings, "is when they announce a decision and they're identified in the press as a Democratic appointee or a Republican appointee." And, Roberts added, "all of a sudden the report is, well, they just decided that way because of politics."

Roberts believes in the concept of judicial restraint. In a recent opinion in the D.C. Circuit, he chided his conservative brethren in a case about the regulation of raw materials used in making drugs, admonishing them, in Justice Felix Frankfurter's words, "to observe the wise limitations on our function and to confine ourselves to deciding only what is necessary to the disposition of the immediate case." In an answer to the senators about his judicial role models, he wrote, "I admire the judicial restraint of Holmes and Brandeis, the intellectual rigor of Frankfurter, the common sense and pragmatism of Jackson, the vision of John Marshall." The question, then, is how this potpourri of influences will translate into his opinions on the Court at a time when, like any Justice, he will be defined by his views on such issues as abortion, church-state controversies, and gay rights—an especially inflammatory issue in recent years.

STEVE BRODNER 05

John Roberts, as lawyer and judge, has more of a paper trail than is widely believed.

STEVE BRODNER

The Supreme Court last considered a gay-rights issue in 2003, in Lawrence v. Texas, when the Justices ruled, six to three, that the state could not criminalize sodomy between two consenting males. The Justices then issued duelling prophecies about the meaning of their decision. Justice Anthony Kennedy's opinion for the majority amounted to a sustained plea for equal rights for homosexuals, who "are entitled to respect for their private lives." But Kennedy asserted that his opinion addressed only the issue before the Court, and did not, for example, presage an endorsement of gay marriage. This disclaimer drew a characteristically biting rejoinder from Scalia in his dissent: "Do not believe it." Rather, Scalia insisted, "Today's opinion is the product of a Court, which is the product of a law-profession culture, that has largely signed on to the so-called homosexual agenda." When the Supreme Court reconvenes, in October, presumably with a Justice Roberts in the junior seat, the Court will return to the "homosexual agenda."

The upcoming case reflects the curious state of the contemporary gay-rights movement. In some respects, and in some places, especially within the legal profession itself, the cause of gay rights has never been stronger. As Scalia noted with dismay in his dissenting opinion in Lawrence, the Association of American Law Schools "(to which any reputable law school *must* seek to belong) excludes from membership any school that refuses to ban from its job-interview facilities a law firm (no matter how small) that does not wish to hire as a prospective partner a person who openly engages in homosexual conduct." At the same time, anti-gay-rights forces have continued to gain strength. After most law schools refused to help military recruiters on their campuses under the policy denounced by Scalia, Congress took another tack. They passed a law saying that if a law school persisted in limiting recruiting by the armed forces, the school would lose federal funding. It is the constitutionality of this law, which is known as the Solomon Amendment, that the Court will decide this fall.

As Supreme Court doctrines go, gay rights is a relatively new one, especially compared with decisions on race and gender. Systematic legal efforts on behalf of gays began only in the nineteen-seventies, and the Justices didn't address the issue in a substantive way until the eighties. But that is changing. In May, a federal district judge in Nebraska struck down a recent amendment to that state's constitution which banned gay marriage and civil unions; an appeal of that ruling is pending. The Court will almost certainly be asked to decide whether gay marriages in Massachusetts must be honored by other states. The Solomon Amendment case will be an important clue about which side has the upper hand.

The series of events leading to the Supreme Court argument on the Solomon Amendment began about forty years ago, with the arrival of Sylvia Law in New York City. Law, who grew up in Bozeman, Montana, won a National Merit Scholarship, which took her, in the early sixties, to Antioch College. "Antioch made you take a job during college, and I got one at the Ethical Culture Society," she said recently. "I got off the train, and I was an instant New Yorker. I wanted to be a civil-rights organizer, and I applied to CORE and the N.A.A.C.P., but all they wanted to know was how fast I could type. I'm a good typist, but a better organizer. So I got a job as a ward clerk at St. Luke's Hospital, for minimum wage, and soon enough I realized I had to get out. I had to have a better credential, so I went to New York University Law School." After graduating in 1968, she spent a few years as a lawyer in the national welfare-rights movement, and then, in 1973, she was invited to teach law at N.Y.U., as one of the first two women to join the faculty.

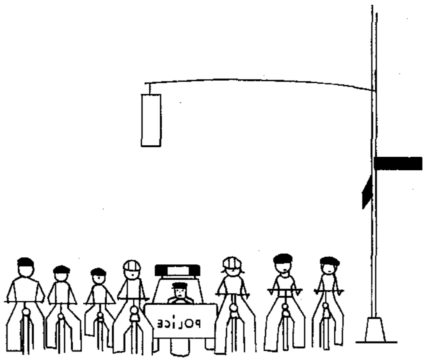
Now sixty-three, Law has a spray of disorderly blond hair and the weary smile that comes from waging a generation's worth of political fights, many of them unsuccessful. In her academic life, Law helped to pioneer the field of health law, studying such varied subjects as malpractice and assisted suicide, and she is now the Elizabeth K. Dollard Professor of Law, Medicine, and Psychiatry. She has kept up as a litigator, too, spending a decade on the losing battle to persuade the courts to recognize a constitutional right to government-funded abortions for poor women. Around the school's Greenwich Village campus, Law may be best known as the unofficial godmother to progressive students and their causes.

"N.Y.U. has an extraordinary and unique role in American legal education," Law said recently in her office, which is decorated with samples from her collection of homemade quilts. "We've been ahead of everyone in welcoming women and blacks to law schools and to the profession." In the late seventies, Law noticed an anomaly in the school's recruitment policy. "We had tons of great gay students, and, among feminists like me, it was obvious to us that gay rights was the next civil-rights movement," she said. So, in 1977, at the instigation of Law and others, the faculty voted overwhelmingly to bar employers who discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation from using the law school's placement office. N.Y.U. was the first law school in the country to add such a provision to its recruiting policy, which did not apply to the rest of the university. Harvard, Yale, and Stanford followed.

The race and gender provisions of the recruiting policies had an immediate effect on both the law school and the firms that recruited there. Burt Neuborne, a well-known civil-rights litigator and another longtime professor at N.Y.U., said, "When Sylvia and I started teaching here, in the early seventies, we still had firms that told us up front that they wouldn't hire blacks. They said the same thing about women. We decided we simply wouldn't allow our facilities to perpetuate that kind of discrimination. And what we did worked magnificently. The law firms simply changed their policies, virtually overnight."

At the same time that liberal law professors were advancing the gay-rights agenda on campus, like-minded lawyers were trying to do the same in the courts. They made it to the Supreme Court in 1986, but the Court's first major gay-rights decision was a tremendous disappointment. In Bowers v. Hardwick, a dismissive opinion by Justice Byron White, for a five-to-four majority, held that the State of Georgia could prosecute individuals for engaging in consensual homosexual sodomy; White wrote that the gay defendant's claim "is, at best, facetious." Perhaps the most revealing cultural marker in the case was that the swing vote, Justice Lewis Powell, told one of his clerks at the time that he had never met a gay person. In fact, according to Powell's biographer John C. Jeffries, Jr., that clerk was gay. (Powell, who died in 1998, later said that he regretted his vote in Bowers.)

Still, the setback in the Supreme Court didn't stop the momentum behind gay rights. In 1990, the Association of American Law Schools approved the rule that offended Scalia—requiring prospective recruiters on their campuses to "observe the principles of equal opportunity." The following year, Bill Clinton, early in his campaign for President, said that he favored allowing gays to serve in the military. "It seemed to me elemental that if a person, a man or a woman, wanted to serve their country they ought to be able to do it," he said in a speech in Los Angeles. The promise drew relatively little attention during the campaign, but when Clinton reiterated it shortly after his inauguration it turned into a political fiasco; the issue dominated his first days in office in a way that the new Administration had never anticipated. On January 25, 1993, "at their urgent request," as Clinton recalled in his memoir, the Joint Chiefs of Staff met with him to announce their unanimous objection to lifting the ban on gays. Congressional opposition, led by Sam Nunn, at that time the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was just as strong. Facing certain defeat, Clinton told his Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, to come up with a compromise, and on July 19th the President announced the policy that became known as "Don't ask, don't tell." The new approach theoretically allowed gays and lesbians to remain in the military, but only if they could convince their superiors that they were celibate. "I got the worst of both worlds," Clinton later wrote—losing the fight to allow gays in the military and earning taunts of betrayal from his gay supporters.



Law schools, though, showed no intention of backing down on gay rights. In 1993, the N.Y.U. faculty went so far as to ban all Colorado law firms from on-campus recruiting, to protest the state's passage of Amendment 2, which repealed state laws that offered protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and forbade the future passage of any such laws. (The faculty rescinded the ban after the Supreme Court struck down Amendment 2, in 1996.) And "Don't ask, don't tell" made the law professors more determined to keep military recruiters off campus.

The campus protests against "Don't ask, don't tell" were noticed by the congressmen who had already embarrassed Clinton on the issue. "I had a group of kids from my district who were going to Sacramento State, and they were worried that they were going to lose their R.O.T.C. scholarships, because the university was throwing the R.O.T.C. off campus," Richard Pombo, a Republican congressman from California, recalled. "So I called an official at the school. He was very abrupt. He said, I don't like the military policy and I don't like the military, and there is nothing you can do about it. It became very adversarial, and I came back to the office and started talking about what we could do about it."

Pombo has a goatee that, by congressional standards, is rakish; he looks younger than his forty-four years, but he's a veteran legislator, now serving his seventh term in a sprawling district that includes the Central Valley, east of San Francisco. Like many Western congressmen, Pombo wears cowboy boots to work in the Capitol, and he often wears a cowboy hat, too, especially when he's being photographed. Early in his congressional career, Pombo focussed mostly on agricultural and resource issues, but the stand of the universities led him to join Gerald Solomon, a Republican congressman from upstate New York, and propose a law that would test the strength of the academics' convictions. In a speech on the floor of the House in 1994, Pombo said that the universities who received money from the federal government "need to know that their starry-eyed idealism comes with a price." (Solomon died in 2001.)

The political trajectory of the Solomon Amendment tracked the ascendant path of social conservatives generally. The first version of the law, which passed in 1994, directed the Department of Defense to withhold funds from any school that restricted military recruitment. As a consequence, N.Y.U. Law School gave up seventy-five thousand dollars in federal funds. But later the law changed, so that if only one part of a university limited recruitment by the military, the entire university would forfeit federal funding. For N.Y.U., that meant a hundred and thirty million dollars, mostly for medical research. Bill Carr, the Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, explains the government's rationale this way: "It's called the 'volunteer' military, but it's really a 'recruited' military. Walk-ins are only about five per cent of our needs. We have to go out and find the other ninety-five per cent, and anything that gets in the way of clear and open talk compromises our effort. That's why we support the Solomon Amendment, because if we want to tell our story to people, and there is a censoring of our message, then our costs of doing business rise. We're a federal agency obeying federal law about gays in the military, and we shouldn't be penalized for it, especially in wartime."

Victoria Roberts

"Just because it doesn't feel like summer to you . . ."

• •

Faced with the potential loss of all federal funds, university presidents, like John Sexton, of N.Y.U., began instructing their law schools to readmit military recruiters. On September 19, 2002, Sexton wrote to Richard Revesz, the dean of the law school, saying that the university stood with the law school in opposing discrimination against gays, but the cost of a stand on principle was simply too high. "Given the consequence of what was at stake, I don't think the university had much choice but to comply," Revesz said. "We let the military recruiters come back on campus but also decided to use every legal means at our disposal to challenge the law." Sylvia Law, along with professors and students at several law schools, filed a federal suit arguing that the Solomon Amendment violates the schools' First Amendment rights to protest against discrimination on sexual orientation.

Like many fights over cultural issues, this one was provoked largely by core activists: it's more the liberal law professoriat, rather than the law students, on one side, and conservative politicians, rather than the military as a whole, on the other. Even the main gay law students' association at N.Y.U. left the lead protest role to a fledgling campus group that called itself Straights and Queers United Against Discrimination, or SQUAD. "No one else wanted to make waves," Richard McKewen, a member of the N.Y.U. Law School Class of 2001 and a founder of SQUAD, said. "So, when the administration caved and let the military back on campus, some of us signed up for interviews and decided to confront the recruiters." On the first day, about a hundred students chanted on the sidewalk, "Don't ask, don't tell. Military go to hell." As for McKewen, he recalled, "Someone gave me a tiara and a feather boa. I tried to talk to the recruiter about how she was complicit in the discriminatory policy, but she pretty quickly cut off that conversation." McKewen is now an attorney for the Federal Trade Commission, in Washington.

By the time Law and others filed their suit, which is known as Forum for Academic and Institutional Rights (FAIR) v. Rumsfeld, the gay-rights movement was doing better in the courts than in the political arena. In 2003, the Supreme Court's Lawrence decision on homosexual sodomy explicitly reversed the seventeen-year-old ruling in Bowers v. Hardwick. Scalia's warning—that Lawrence would lead to a right to gay marriage—was at least partially vindicated the following year, when the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts relied heavily on Lawrence in allowing gays to marry there. Gay-rights forces won another victory on November 29, 2004, when a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit ruled, two to one, that the Solomon Amendment violated the universities' rights to protest against the military.

In Congress, though, support for the law has only grown. On February 2, 2005, in response to the Third Circuit's ruling, the House voted 327–84 in favor of a resolution reiterating support for the Solomon Amendment. "The gut reaction with members is, Don't mess with the military," Pombo said. "It hasn't been a big partisan issue, except for people who are really out of touch." On May 2nd, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the appeal of the Third Circuit's decision in FAIR v. Rumsfeld, and it will be argued on November 29th, very likely before a Court that will include John Roberts.

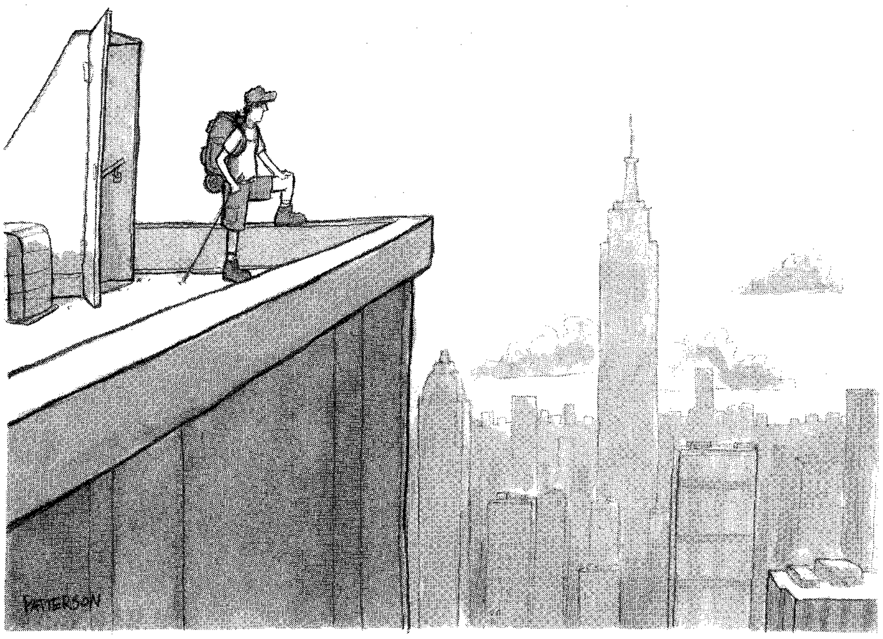
In his judicial writing, Roberts avoids legalese; he recently implored, "Give me English words over Latin maxims." His opinions so far have borne out his suggestion to the Judiciary Committee, in 2003, that he was not, in effect, a Scalia-style ideologue. "I do not believe that beginning with an all-encompassing, categorical judicial philosophy or uniform approach to constitutional questions is the best way of faithfully construing the Constitution," he wrote. "Different approaches may be better suited to different constitutional provisions." Most of the current Justices follow this more ad-hoc philosophy, and, because the Court does not always take a head-on approach to the issues before it, there are sometimes less predictable voting patterns among the Justices. For example, the Court's ruling in the medical-marijuana case, in June, did not directly address the propriety of such treatment, only the question of whether the power to regulate it belonged to the federal government or the states. In that case, the Justices' views on federal power apparently trumped any feelings they might have about medical marijuana itself; so the more liberal members of the Court (plus Scalia) ruled in favor of federal supremacy, while Rehnquist, Thomas, and the ardently pro-states'-rights O'Connor said that the states should have the right to legalize the practice.

Even though the FAIR case is rooted in the law schools' attempt to address discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, the case is not, strictly speaking, about gay rights. It is, rather, a First Amendment case, about whether the Solomon Amendment impinges on the right to freedom of speech at universities, and whether the government has the right to use the leverage of federal aid to insist that the military be treated like other employers.

In fact, the precise legal issue in the case is surprisingly difficult to identify, and often the trick for Supreme Court litigators is how to define the question in the most advantageous terms. A successful example of this kind of intellectual sorcery came in a series of cases in the nineteen-nineties, when Jay Sekulow engineered a change in the law of religious expression in public places. Previously, the Court had struck down most such public displays in places like schools and government buildings, as a violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment; the Court found that such conduct breached the wall between church and state. Sekulow argued that these cases weren't really about the establishment clause at all but, rather, about freedom of speech; he convinced the Court that students who wished to use school facilities for prayer groups were the victims of government censorship. "The first thing you always have to do is frame the issue, and I took a lot of heat from people on my side, who thought I was abandoning the religion clauses of the First Amendment," Sekulow said. "But I wanted to win the case."

The lawyers on both sides of FAIR are trying to slot their case into a category that works best for their side. For some of the plaintiffs, the government is acting as a malevolent censor. "Government can't give you a little bit of money and then tell the whole university how to run," Kathleen M. Sullivan, a professor and former dean at Stanford Law School, who is preparing an amicus brief in support of the plaintiffs, says. "Government can't have that much leverage. If we lose this case, there is nothing to stop the government from saying it will take away all federal funds if a university engages in stem-cell research, or gives birth control to its students, or performs abortions in its hospital."

In the Third Circuit decision, Judge Thomas L. Ambro, writing for the majority, saw the case as an infringement on the law schools' collective right to freedom of speech. He did so on the basis of a curious analogy. In 2000, the Supreme Court held that the State of New Jersey could not force the Boy Scouts to accept an openly gay man as an Assistant Scoutmaster. To do so, the Justices held, would have violated the Scouts' rights to free speech under the First Amendment, specifically their desire not "to promote homosexual conduct as a legitimate form of behavior." According to Ambro, "Just as the Boy Scouts believed that 'homosexual conduct is inconsistent with the Scout Oath,' the law schools believe that employment discrimination is inconsistent with their commitment to justice and fairness." To allow the military to recruit on campus like other potential employers, the Judge wrote, the universities "must propagate, accommodate and subsidize the military's expressive mes-



sage." Under the First Amendment, he concluded, the recruiting by the military amounted to "compelled speech," which the government could not force the universities to undertake. As E. Joshua Rosenkranz, the New York lawyer who represents Sylvia Law and the other plaintiffs, says, "The military is saying to the universities, 'We will come onto your campus. We will discriminate against your students. And you will help us do it.' "

The FAIR case also tests the murky concept of freedom of association. To the plaintiffs, the case is about universities deciding for themselves with whom they want to associate on their own campuses. But that freedom has a limit, especially when federal funds are involved. "The Court has said that there is expressive content, an ideological view, to the Boy Scouts, and even in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Boston, so the government can't force the people who run the Scouts, or the people who run the parade, to associate with people they don't want to associate with," Charles Fried, a professor at Harvard Law School, who was Solicitor General in the Reagan Administration, says. "But neither the Scouts nor the parade organizers were taking federal money. When a group takes money from the government, the government is allowed to attach strings. And allowing military recruiters is a perfectly appropriate string." (Roberts appears likely to share this view, which cannot be good news for the plaintiffs in the FAIR case. Last year, he joined an opinion in the D.C. Circuit which held that Congress could attach certain conditions to the funding of the Washington subway system. And in his written answers to the Judiciary Committee two years ago, he expressed some skepticism about the argument that strings attached to federal funding could amount to undue coercion on the states, referring to the "heavy burden one advancing such a claim would bear.")

As the government sees it, the FAIR case is not about free speech or association but, rather, about the right of the federal government to control how taxpayers' money is spent. The federal government attaches strings all the time. Money to states for highways can be conditional on road-safety standards and a drinking age of twenty-one; grants to universities come with the strictures of Title VI and Title IX, which require equal treatment of students by race and gender. "By allowing the military to recruit at their law school, the schools are not in any way making any statement or associating with any statement by the military," Fried says.

The theme of the government's brief in the case, which was filed last week, is equality: the amendment simply puts the government on a level playing field with other potential employers. "Educational institutions covered by the Solomon Amendment have not been *compelled* to do anything," the brief states. "They have voluntarily chosen to accept federal funding on the condition that they provide military recruiters with equal access to their students and campuses. Institutions that do not wish to provide equal access to military recruiters may decline federal assistance."

Most observers regard the legal arguments of both sides in FAIR as at least plausible, but most of the current Justices would probably want to defer to the needs of the military. Roberts's history suggests that he would do the same; the concept of judicial restraint means a reluctance to invalidate the actions of the other branches of government. In its brief, the Justice Department plays up this part of the case, asserting, for example, that the government must have the right to resist "conduct that undermines the military's recruitment effort, particularly in a time of War." Even if the plaintiffs lose decisively, FAIR should probably be regarded as a skirmish in a wider war.

In the era of the Warren Court, in the nineteen-sixties, the concept of judicial restraint was largely associated with the political right—with resisting judicial interference in the governance of sovereign states. In recent years, though, the political right has tried to use the courts to push its own agenda. If a newly constituted Court establishes an abiding commitment to judicial restraint, the right as well as the left is likely to suffer disappointments. Two years ago, in his Senate testimony, Roberts said, "My clients and their positions are liberal and conservative across the board." He was speaking, of course, about his work as an advocate, not his future as a final arbiter of the nation's laws. ♦

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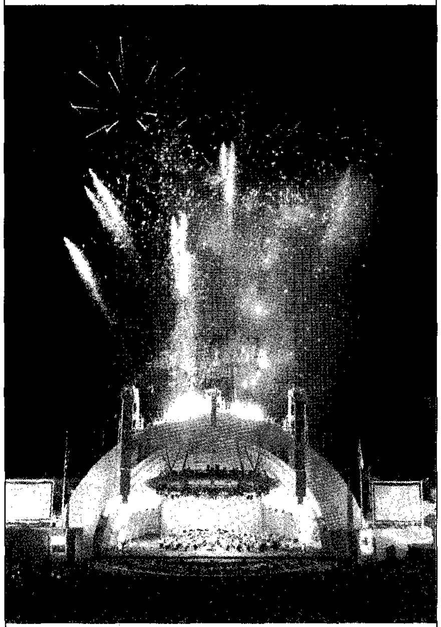

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REFLECTIONS

IT'S CATCHING

Worms, germs, and Christmas.

BY DAVID SEDARIS

ARNOLD ROTH

My friend Patsy was telling me a story. "So I'm at the movie theatre," she said, "and I've got my coat all neatly laid out against the back of my seat, when this guy comes along—" And here I stopped her, because I've always wondered about this coat business. When I'm in a theatre, I either fold mine in my lap or throw it over my armrest, but Patsy tends to spread hers out, acting as if the seat back were cold, and she couldn't possibly enjoy herself while it was suffering.

"Why do you do that?" I asked, and she looked at me, saying, "Germs, silly. All kinds of people have had their heads against that seat back. Doesn't that just give you the creeps?" And I admitted that it had never occurred to me.

"Well, you'd never lie on a hotel bedspread, would you?" she asked, and again: why not? I might not put it in my mouth, but to stretch out and make a few phone calls—I do it all the time.

"But you wash the phone first, right?"

"Umm. No."

"Well, that is just . . . dangerous," she said.

In a similar vein, I was at the grocery store with my sister Lisa and noticed her pushing the cart with her forearms.

"What's up?" I asked.

"Oh," she said. "You don't ever want to touch the handle of a grocery cart with your bare hands. These things are crawling with germs."

Is it just Americans, or does everyone think this way? In Paris once, I went to my neighborhood supermarket and saw a man shopping with his cockatiel, which was the size of a teen-age eagle and stood perched on the handle of his cart.

"See?" Lisa said. "There's no telling what foot diseases that bird might have." She had a point, but it's not like everyone takes a cockatiel to the grocery store. A lifetime of shopping, and this was the first exotic bird I'd ever seen browsing the meat counter.

The only preventive thing I do is wash clothes after buying them in a thrift shop—this after catching crabs from a pair of used pants. I was in my mid-twenties at the time, and probably would have itched myself all the way to the bone had a friend not taken me to a drugstore, where I got a bottle of something called Quell. After applying it, I raked through my pubic hair with a special nit comb, and what I came away with was a real eye-opener: these little monsters who'd been feasting for weeks on my flesh. I guess they're what Patsy imagines when she looks at a theatre seat, what Lisa sees lurking on the handle of a grocery cart.

They're minor, though, compared with what Hugh had. He was eight years old and living in the Congo, when he noticed a red spot on his leg; nothing huge—a mosquito bite, he figured. The following day, the spot became more painful, and the day after that he looked down and saw a worm poking out.

A few weeks later, the same thing happened to Maw Hamrick, which is what I call Hugh's mother, Joan, and though her worm was a bit shorter, I think it's much worse in terms of trauma or whatnot. If I was a child and saw something creeping out of a hole in my mother's leg, I would march to the nearest orphanage and put myself up for adoption. I would burn all pictures of her, destroy anything she had ever given me, and start all over because that is just disgusting. A dad can be crawling with parasites and somehow it's O.K., but on a mom, or any woman, really, it's unforgivable.

"Well, that's sort of chauvinistic of you, don't you think?" Maw Hamrick said. She'd come to Paris for Christmas, as had Lisa and her husband, Bob. The gifts had all been opened, and Maw was collecting the used wrapping paper off the floor and ironing it flat with her hands.

"It was just a guinea worm, people got them all the time." She looked toward the kitchen, where Hugh was doing something to a goose. "Honey, where do you want me to put this paper?"

"Burn it," Hugh said.

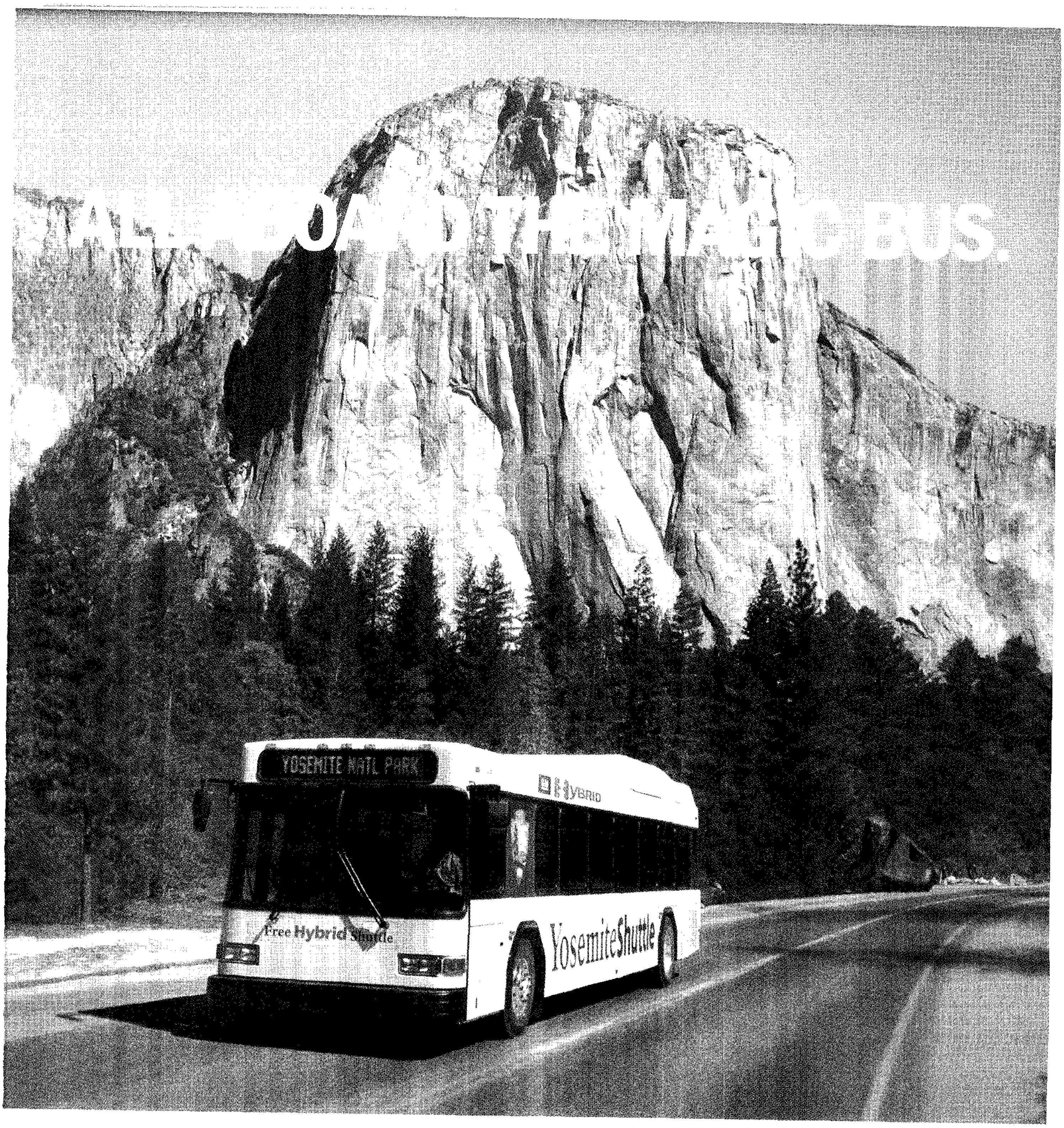
"Oh, but it's so pretty. Are you sure you won't want to use it again?"

"Burn it," Hugh repeated.

"What's this about a worm?" Lisa asked. She was lying on the sofa with a blanket over her, still groggy from her nap.

"Joan here had a worm living inside her leg," I said, and Maw Hamrick threw a sheet of wrapping paper into the fire, saying, "Oh, I wouldn't call that *living*."

"But it was *inside* of you?" Lisa said, and I could see her wheels turning: *Have I ever used the toilet after this woman? Have I*



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ever touched her coffee cup, or eaten off her plate? How soon can I get tested? Are the hospitals open on Christmas Day, or will I have to wait until tomorrow?

"It was a long time ago," Joan said.

"Like, how long?" Lisa asked.

"I don't know—1968, maybe."

My sister nodded, the way someone does when they're doing math in their head. "Right," she said, and I regretted having brought it up. She was no longer looking *at* Maw Hamrick but *through* her, seeing what an X-ray machine might: the stark puzzle of bones and, teeming within it, the thousands of worms who did not leave home in 1968. I used to see the same thing, but after fifteen years or so I got over it, and now I just see Maw Hamrick. Maw Hamrick ironing, Maw Hamrick doing the dishes, Maw Hamrick taking out the trash. She wants to be a good house guest, and is always looking for something to do.

"Can I maybe . . . ?" she asks, and before she's finished I answer yes, by all means.

"Did you tell my mother to crawl on her hands and knees across the living-room floor?" Hugh asks, and I say, "Well, no, not exactly. I just suggested that if she was going to dust the baseboards that would be the best way to do it."

When Maw Hamrick's around, I don't lift a finger. All my chores go automatically to her, and I just sit in a rocker, lifting my feet every now and then so she can pass the vacuum. It's incredibly relaxing, but it doesn't look very good, especially if she's doing something strenuous, carrying furniture to the basement, for instance, which, again, was completely her idea. I just mentioned in passing that we rarely used the dresser, and that one of these days someone should take it downstairs. I didn't mean her, exactly, though at age seventy-three she's a lot stronger than Hugh gives her credit for. Coming from Kentucky, she's used to a hard day's work. Choppin', totin', all those activities with a dropped "g": the way I figure, these things are in her genes.

It's only a problem when other people are around, and they see this slight, white-haired woman with sweat running down her forehead. Lisa and Bob, for instance, who were staying in Patsy's empty apartment. Every night they'd come over for dinner, and Maw Hamrick would hang up their coats before ironing the napkins and setting the table. Then she'd serve drinks and head into the kitchen to help Hugh.

"You really lucked out," Lisa said, sighing, as Joan rushed to empty my ashtray. Her mother-in-law had recently moved into an assisted-living development, and was having a hard time adjusting. The word "senior" is demeaning to her, so she's asking to be referred to as a graying tiger, which makes her sound like a retired karate teacher. Lisa lowered her voice. "I'd much rather have a mother-in-law who was eaten by worms."

"Well, they didn't technically eat her," I said.

"Then what were they living on? Are you telling me they brought their own food?"

I guessed she was right, but what do guinea worms eat? Certainly not fat, or they'd never have gone to Joan, who weighs ninety pounds, tops, and can still fit into her prom gown. Not muscle, or she'd never be able to take over my chores. Do they drink blood? Drill holes in bone and sop up the marrow? I meant to ask, but when Maw Hamrick returned to the living room the topic immediately turned to cholesterol, Lisa saying, "I don't mean to pry, Joan, but what is your level?"

It was one of those conversations I was destined to be left out of. Not only have I never been tested; I'm not sure what cholesterol actually is. I hear the word and imagine a pale gravy, made by hand, with lumps in it.

"Have you tried fish oil?" Lisa asked. "That brought Bob's level from three-eighty to two-twenty. Before that, he was on Lipitor." My sister knows the name and corresponding medication for every disease known to man, an impressive feat given that she's completely self-taught. Congenital ichthyosis, myositis ossificans, spondylolisthesis, calling for Celebrex, Flexeril, oxycodone hydrochloride. I joked that she'd never bought a magazine in her life, that she reads them for free in doctors' waiting rooms, and she asked what my cholesterol level was. "You better see a doctor, Mister, because you're not as young as you think you are. And while you're there you might want to have those moles looked at."

It was nothing I wanted to think about, especially on Christmas, a fire in the fireplace, the apartment smelling of goose. "Let's talk about accidents, instead," I said. "Heard of any good ones?"

"Well, it's not exactly an accident," Lisa said, "but did you know that every year five thousand children are startled to death?" It was a difficult concept to grasp, so she threw off her blanket and acted it out. "Say a little girl is running down the hall, playing with her parents, and the dad pops up from behind a corner saying 'Boo!' or 'Gotcha!' or whatever. Well, it turns out that that child can actually collapse and die."

"I don't like that one bit," Maw Hamrick said.

"Well, no, neither do I," Lisa said. "I'm just saying that it happens at least five thousand times a year."

"In America or the world over?" Joan asked, and my sister called to her husband in the other room. "Bob, are five thousand children a year startled to death in the United States or in the entire world put together?" He didn't answer, so Lisa decided it was just the United States. "And those are just the reported cases," she said. "A lot of parents probably don't want to own up to it, so their children's deaths are attributed to something else."

"Those poor children," Maw Hamrick said.

"And the *parents!*" Lisa added. "Can you imagine?"

Both groups are tragic, but I was wondering about the surviving children, or, even worse, the replacements, raised in an atmosphere of preventive sobriety.

"All right, now, Caitlin 2, when we get home a great many people are going to jump out from behind the furniture and yell, 'Happy birthday!' I'm telling you now because I don't want you to get too worked up about it."

No surprises, no practical jokes, nothing unexpected, but a parent can't control everything, and there's still the outside world to contend with, a world of backfiring cars and their human equivalents.

Maybe one day you'll look down and see a worm, waving its blind, wrinkled head from a hatch it has bored in your leg. If that won't stop your heart, I don't know what will, but Hugh and his mother seem to have survived. Thrived, even. The Hamricks are made of stronger stuff than me. That's why I let them cook the goose, move the furniture, launder the hideous creatures from my secondhand clothing. If anything were to startle them to death, it would be my offer to pitch in, and so I settle back on the sofa with my sister and wave my coffee cup in the air, signalling for another refill. ♦

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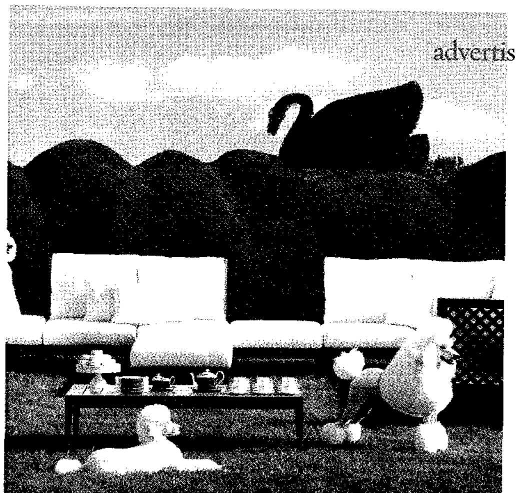

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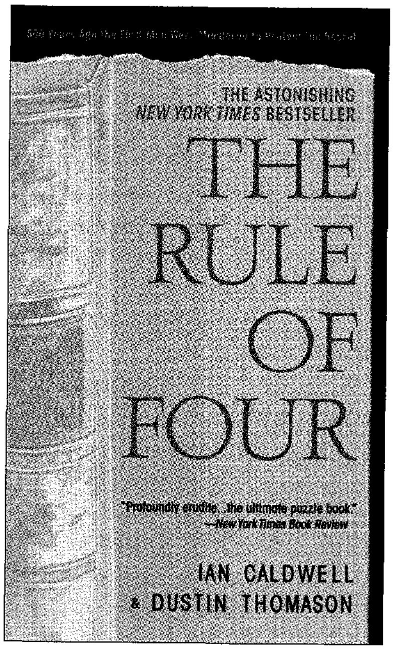
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PROFILES

THE RINGLEADER

How Grover Norquist keeps the conservative movement together.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

For much of the twentieth century, Washington was a Democratic town. Presidents came and went, but on Capitol Hill, which is where the tax dollars get spent, liberals and moderates dominated the key committees and set the legislative agenda. Washington's permanent establishment—the law firms, the lobbyists, the research institutes, the media—was also heavily Democratic. Even when Republicans took over, they tended to be consensus builders, like Howard Baker and Bob Dole, who rarely challenged the ruling ethos. Especially after Senator Barry Goldwater, of Arizona, made his disastrous bid for the Presidency, in 1964, conservative Republicans were regarded as oddballs. In 1974, when the American Conservative Union organized its first annual Conservative Political Action Conference, or CPAC, it was able to muster just three co-sponsors: an organization called Young Americans for Freedom and the magazines *National Review* and *Human Events*. "The movement was so small that I liken it to when Marx and Lenin were in exile," David Keene, the president of the American Conservative Union, said to me recently.

Gradually, the political climate changed. An important moment came in 1979, when Ronald Reagan embraced the religious right, something that Goldwater had always declined to do—social conservatives like Jerry Falwell deserved "a swift kick in the ass," he once commented. Since then, conservatives have taken control of much of the federal government, and they have also created their own research institutes, lobbying firms, networking organizations, and media outlets. This year's CPAC, at which Vice-President Dick Cheney was one of the speakers, had more than ninety co-sponsors.

Grover G. Norquist, a former young Reaganite whom Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker from 1995 to 1998, described to me as "the single most effective conservative activist in the country," has helped bring about this transformation. For all its success, the right is an often fractious alliance of evangelical Christians, laissez-faire liberals, neoconservatives, corporate conservatives, and many other sects and sub-sects. Norquist plays a key role in keeping the coalition together, acting, by turns, as ringleader, visionary, and enforcer. "It's very unusual to have a leader in the conservative movement who can unite everybody," Charles Black, a veteran Republican strategist, says. "Grover's got a way of convincing people that they are important and that what they are doing is significant." Norquist has some critics on the right—the pundit Tucker Carlson once called him "a mean-spirited, humorless, dishonest little creep"—but his ability to marshal disparate groups has earned him access to the highest levels of power. "There's nobody like Grover," Ralph Z. Hallow, a political reporter for the Washington *Times*, says. "He's close to the White House. That means Karl"—the Presidential adviser Karl Rove. "He's well liked on the Hill. And he's also trusted by the movement."

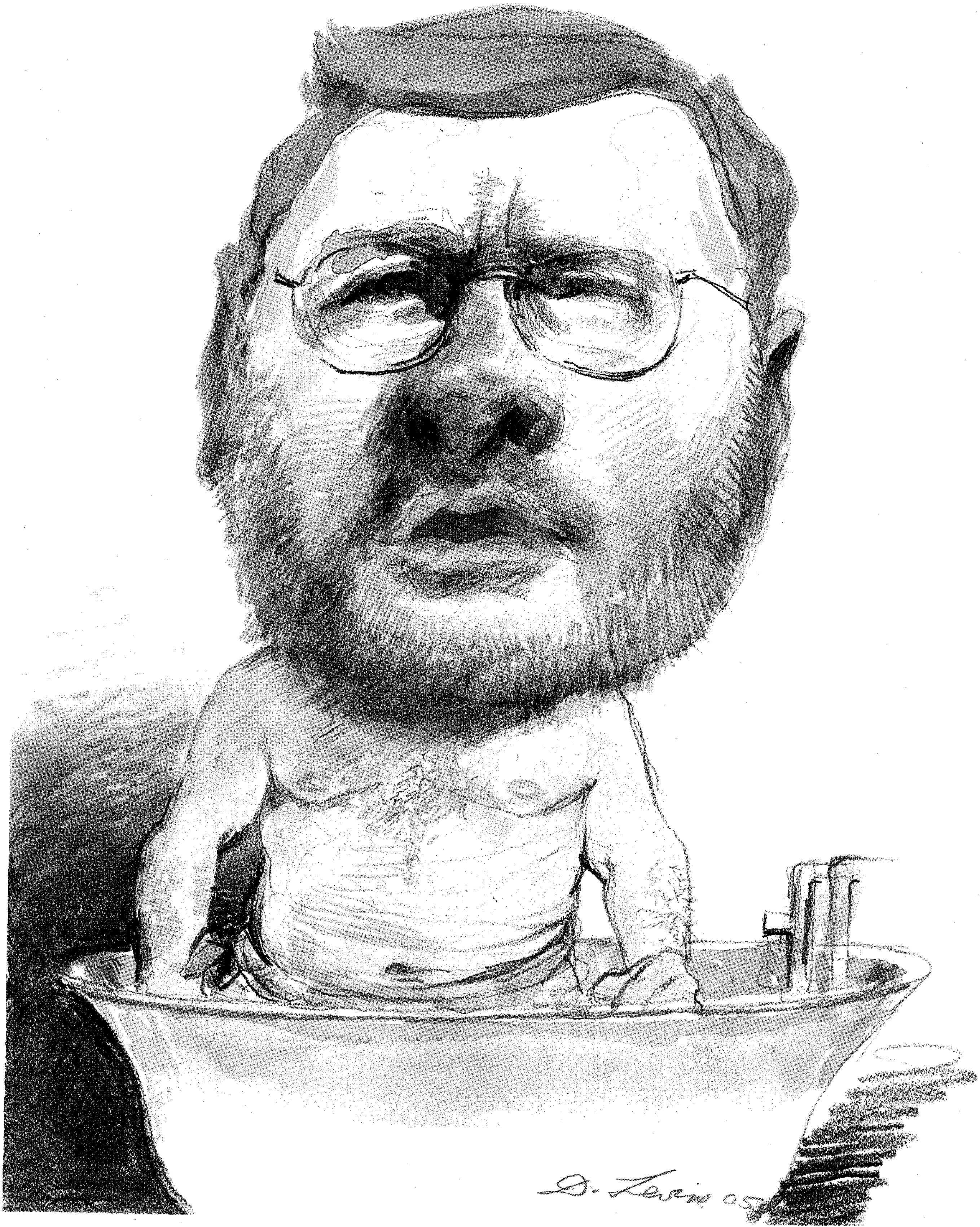
Norquist has never held an elected office, but, since taking over the advocacy group Americans for Tax Reform, in 1985, he has persuaded countless Republican politicians into signing a pledge not to raise taxes under any circumstances, among them two hundred and twenty-two congressmen and forty-six senators. Norquist's advocacy extends to other conservative goals, such as free trade and reform of the labor laws. Last summer, when I met with him for the first time, he said that his ultimate aim is to halve the size of the government relative to the size of the economy and to undo several decades of liberal policy, and, he added, "it's doable."

Norquist, at forty-eight, is squat, bearded, and bespectacled. He has pale-blue eyes and reddish-brown hair that lies flat on his square head. Contrary to Carlson's opinion, he does possess a sense of humor, but it doesn't detract from his monomaniacal passion for politics. As we talked in his cluttered office, near the corner of Twentieth and L Streets, in downtown Washington, he paced back and forth, opening and closing his briefcase, rearranging books on his shelves, moving pens and papers around on his desk, and, finally, bending down to pick up bits of dust. As long as George W. Bush was in the White House and the Republicans controlled Congress, he assured me, every year would bring a new tax cut and further conservative legislation. "That is how the Democrats built the New Deal and the Great Society," Norquist said. "Every year more spending, every year more programs."

Last November, when President Bush was reëlected and the Republicans regained control of the Senate, Norquist's prediction of an emerging conservative hegemony seemed accurate. There appeared to be little to prevent the President from transforming Social Security, opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for drilling, and making permanent the tax cuts he introduced in his first term. In recent months, however, something surprising has happened: the forgotten center of American politics has reasserted itself. Dozens of Republican congressmen have defied the President to support the expansion of embryonic-stem-cell research; seven Republican senators have joined with seven Democrats to preserve the judicial filibuster; the President's proposals for Social Security have faltered as the Democrats have seized on the issue; and the White House and social conservatives squabbled, to begin with, anyway, over who should replace Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court.

Norquist, too, has suffered some reverses. On Capitol Hill, his economic agenda has been stalled, and in many parts of the country Republican gover-

DAVID LEVINE



Norquist calls Democrats "the enemy" and talks about slashing the federal government enough to "drown it in the bathtub."

nors and legislators have ignored his dictates and raised taxes. What's more, he has been dragged into the corruption scandal surrounding Tom DeLay, the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, and Jack Abramoff, the disgraced Republican lobbyist who paid the airfare for DeLay's now notorious golfing trip to Scotland in September, 2000. Norquist is an old friend and political ally of Abramoff's, and they have worked together on a number of political issues. Democrats have seized on their connection to try and discredit Norquist. "Ten years ago, Grover Norquist and Jack Abramoff set out to change the Republican Party," Karen Finney, the communications director of the Democratic National Committee, said to me last week. "Their dealings in this town are representative of a culture of corruption and abuse of power."

On Wednesday mornings, Norquist hosts an off-the-record gathering of conservative activists that has evolved into a wide-ranging forum for members of Congress, Capitol Hill staffers, single-issue campaigners, journalists, policy wonks, and corporate lobbyists. Karl Rove shows up every few months, and other Administration officials attend on a regular basis. The "Wednesday meeting," as it is known, has become so popular that Norquist's friend John Fund, a columnist at the *Wall Street Journal*, has christened him the Grand Central Station of conservatism.

The meeting starts at ten o'clock sharp and finishes sometime between eleven-thirty and twelve, depending on the agenda. Norquist sits at a big oval wooden table with about twenty regulars. The rest of the crowd gathers along the sides of the room, where there is seating for about a hundred. Often, people have to stand. One day this spring, Norquist opened the meeting by talking about his ongoing fight to persuade Mitch Daniels, a former White House budget director who is now the governor of Indiana, not to raise taxes. "Our dear friend Mitch Daniels had his brain temporarily kidnapped by North Koreans, but we are now winning the battle," Norquist said. "Fortunately, Mitch has reversed his policy, adopted our position, and proclaimed it as his own."

Norquist loves to declaim. He refers to Democrats as "the enemy"; he has described bipartisanship as "date rape"; and he likes to talk about reducing the federal government so much that he could "drown it in the bathtub." For policymakers like Rove, he provides an invaluable link to the Republican Party's conservative base, which is often suspicious of elected politicians and officeholders. For the activists who constitute that base, Norquist combines access to power with the aura of an outsider. "Grover came to Washington believing in and working for certain things, and, in spite of lures and blandishments from all sorts of people, he has stuck with what he believes," Peggy Noonan, a former White House speechwriter, who has known Norquist for more than twenty years, wrote to me in a recent e-mail. "Others came to D.C. and became co-opted, subtly and comfortably, by the big murky muddle, which can offer so much: insiderism, big Administration jobs, celebration as a moderate by the MSM"—mainstream media. "None of that seemed to tempt Grover."

"I got eight to twelve years, which was in line with Wall Street expectations."

The first guest speaker was Tim Goeglein, a thin, bow-tied White House official, who talked about the ongoing standoff on Capitol Hill, where Senate Democrats were blocking the approval of some Republican nominees, including half a dozen conservative judges and John Bolton, the ambassador-designate to the United Nations. Outraged Republicans were threatening to exercise the so-called "nuclear option" of abolishing the filibuster, which allows a minority of senators to defy the majority. During last year's election, the Bush Administration intimated that it intended to remake the Supreme Court in a conservative image if, as was expected, Chief Justice Rehnquist and at least one other justice stepped down. Social conservatives, in particular, viewed the filibuster battle as the precursor to this long-awaited takeover of the high court, and Goeglein didn't do anything to dampen their hopes. One way or another, Bolton and the judges would be approved, he said. And he added, "This may be the most successful judicial-coalition effort in modern Republican history. And it is largely because of people in this room, so thanks."

Although Norquist's own policy interests are primarily economic, he knows that social issues are the principal battleground for many conservatives, and he makes sure to invite representatives both from religious organizations like Focus on the Family and the Eagle Forum and from non-sectarian groups interested in social issues, such as the Federalist Society, an organization of conservative lawyers that works closely with the White House on judicial nominations. Norquist micromanages every aspect of the meeting, down to the type of coffee served. To keep things moving, he restricts each presenter to a couple of minutes. A member of his staff talked about the attempt to make the abolition of the estate tax permanent. Ed Bryant, a potential Senate candidate from Tennessee, extolled his conservative credentials, saying that he had signed Norquist's tax pledge and committed himself to the judicial battle. A Republican staffer from the House of Representatives delivered an update on a new Social Security bill. "Keep an eye open for the V.A.T. guys," Norquist said, referring to the value-added tax that many countries impose. "V.A.T. is a French word for big government."

After about an hour, a woman named Stacie Rumenap, from the American Conservative Union, began to talk excitedly about an upcoming tribute dinner for Tom DeLay. Despite accusations that he put family members on his payroll and took overseas trips paid for, in part, by Abramoff, DeLay remains a hero to many conservatives. "We are at capacity—more than nine hundred people have bought tickets," Rumenap said. "The reception starts at six o'clock, and the dinner will start at seven. We are expecting some protesters, but the D.C. police will be prepared to deal with them." Another woman added, "It will be the usual freaks, so ignore them. The Democrats are in disarray. We are winning. We are going to get a vote on Bolton. We are going to get the judges. So just ignore them and enjoy yourselves."

After the meeting, Norquist walked to the Palm, a steakhouse on Nineteenth Street, where he strategized about the "nuclear option" with David MacIntosh, a former Republican congressman from Indiana, who helped set up the Federalist Society. Over lunch, Norquist argued that the Republicans could end up benefitting even if the effort to end the filibuster failed initially. "Say we lose by forty-nine to fifty-one because moderates like Voinovich and Snowe"—George Voinovich, of Ohio, and Olympia Snowe, of Maine—"oppose it," he said. "Then we try to appoint a conservative judge to the Supreme Court, and the Democrats beat us up on it for five months and piss off the public. Then we could go back and ask for another vote on the filibuster."

Norquist grew up in Weston, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. His father, Warren, was a senior executive at Polaroid, a Methodist, and a moderate Republican. Grover says that he himself became interested in conservative politics when, at the age of thirteen, he picked up two anti-Communist books from his local library: "Masters of Deceit," by J. Edgar Hoover, and "Witness," by Whittaker Chambers. In those days, he wasn't thinking of going into politics. After reading the autobiographies of Thomas Dewey and Lewis E. Lawes, a warden at Sing Sing, he wanted to become a prosecutor.

Norquist entered Harvard in 1974. He was basically a libertarian then, his classmate John Brady, who is now a successful businessman, told me. Brady met Norquist at a gathering of the College Republicans, whose national chairman at the time was Karl Rove, but he recalls that Norquist was more interested in journalism than in student politics. After working at the *Advocate* and at the *Crimson*, Norquist became involved with the *Harvard Chronicle*, the in-house journal of the Harvard Libertarian Association.

In 1978, after graduating with a major in economics, Norquist moved to Washington and went to work for the National Taxpayers Union, where his energy and his meticulousness got him rapidly promoted to executive director. After a year, he returned to Cambridge, at the behest of his father, to attend Harvard Business School. By then, though, he had decided to pursue a career in politics. While working on Ronald Reagan's Presidential campaign, he met Jack Abramoff, a student at Brandeis. The unlikely pair—a Wasp libertarian and a Jewish Reaganite—became close friends. In early 1981, Norquist, using his dorm room as an office, ran Abramoff's bid to become chairman of the College Republicans. Abramoff was elected, and he appointed Norquist executive director, which gave him the opportunity to return to Washington.

He never left. After six months with Abramoff, he took a job directing Americans for the Reagan Agenda, an advocacy group that the White House had set up. The Democrats could still exert considerable influence on the Hill, and even some Republicans were deeply suspicious of Reagan's tax-cutting program. Young radicals like Norquist were regarded as "crazies" and "revolutionaries," in part because of their backing for anti-Communist groups abroad. Norquist went to Pakistan to express his support for the Afghan mujahideen, to Mozambique, and to Angola, where he grew a beard and spent time with the guerrilla group UNITA, although he didn't see much action.

In 1985, Donald Regan, Reagan's chief of staff, chose Norquist to head Americans for Tax Reform, another advocacy group that the Administration was setting up, this time to lobby for a radical overhaul of the tax code. Norquist was only twenty-nine, and he quickly learned that generating public support for any sort of major change is difficult. "I discovered there was no public interest in fundamental tax reform," he said. "We offered to pay for the public to send telegrams to congressmen demanding reform, but almost nobody sent one. People wouldn't even send a free letter."

Despite this discouraging start, Congress passed the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which reduced the top income-tax rate from fifty per cent to twenty-eight per cent. Still, the Reaganites feared that Congress would allow tax rates to creep back up, and Norquist got the idea of persuading members of the House and Senate to sign a pledge never to raise taxes. He wrote the pledge himself, in simple declarative sentences:

> I, _______, pledge to the taxpayers of the ______district of the State of _______ and to the American People that I will:
>
> ONE, oppose any and all efforts to increase the marginal income tax rates for individuals and/or businesses; and
>
> TWO, oppose any net reduction or elimination of deductions and credits, unless matched dollar for dollar by further reducing tax rates.
>
> Signed _____________

In a political system that was constructed on the Burkean notion that elected officials are deliberators rather than mere delegates, Norquist's pledge didn't please everybody, but its impact has been persistent and dramatic. "Politicians always promise people everything," David Keene said. "By saying, 'O.K., sign this,' it gives a degree of accountability."

President George H. W. Bush, who had signed Norquist's pledge during the 1988 election campaign, paid a high price in the 1992 election for breaking his promise, much to Norquist's delight. "Had Bush been able to win in 1992, it would have made the pledge meaningless," Norquist says. "Bush had a pretty good Presidency. He ended the Cold War peacefully. He kicked Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. But he broke his commitment to the American people. Then he gets thrown out of office by a bum—a nobody from Arkansas. The message was: You can't break the pledge."

Norquist's theory of American politics is disarmingly simple: liberals want something from the government; conservatives want the government to leave them alone. During the Roosevelt-Kennedy-Johnson era, he says, the Democratic Party prospered because it delivered things its constituents demanded: stronger labor laws for union members; retirement benefits for seniors; and affirmative-action programs for minorities. The reason the Republicans have replaced the Democrats as the ruling party is that they cater to popular distaste for the federal government.

"The guy who wants to be left alone to practice his faith, the guy who wants to make money, the guy who wants to spend money without paying taxes, the guy who wants to fondle his gun—they all have a lot in common," Norquist said one day this spring in a taxi going from George Bush International Airport, in Houston, to the George R. Brown Convention Center, where the National Rifle Association was holding its annual convention. "They all want the government to go away. That is what holds together the conservative movement."

Norquist regards gun owners as a crucial element of his "leave us alone" coalition, and since 2000 he has been a director of the N.R.A. Attending the board meeting that was scheduled to take place after the convention was so important to him that he had delayed his honeymoon. At the start of April, he married Samah Alreyyes, a thirty-two-year-old public-affairs officer at the United States Agency for International Development. But, rather than depart for London, Paris, and the Seychelles immediately, he and his new wife chose to wait a couple of weeks.

Norquist got to Houston on a Sunday afternoon. During the first three days of the convention, more than sixty thousand people had attended a variety of parties and panel sessions, including one devoted to "God, Guns and Rock 'n' Roll," which was hosted by Ted Nugent. "To show you how radical I am, I want carjackers dead," the aging rocker roared at the crowd between songs. "I want rapists dead. I want burglars dead. I want child molesters dead. No court case. No parole. No early release. I want 'em dead. Get a gun, and when they attack you shoot 'em."

"Did you see Ted Nugent?" Wayne La Pierre, the N.R.A.'s chief executive, asked Norquist when he greeted him at a reception for board members. "It's amazing—he really can play the guitar." Norquist said that he had just arrived. "But I saw him play with Lynyrd Skynyrd last year," he added. "He was great."

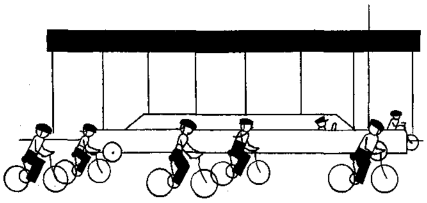
A little later, a tough-looking man wearing a bootlace tie tapped Norquist on the shoulder and said, in a heavy Long Island accent, "Grover, when are you going to get it together and break George Pataki's arm?" The speaker was John L. Cushman, a former marine from Patchogue, in Suffolk County, who had been campaigning in Albany to relax New York's tough gun laws.

Norquist turned to Cushman and said, "Why, what's up?"

"I finally got a bill through both houses, and Pataki vetoed it," Cushman replied, with a sneer. "He said, 'Oh, no, that's an N.R.A. bill,' and he vetoed it."

Norquist looked surprised. He has a good relationship with Governor Pataki, who is considering a bid for the White House in 2008. A few days earlier, Pataki had called to reassure him that he had just cut some taxes. "Send me the particulars of the gun bill," Norquist said to Cushman. "And I'll get it to him."

As part of his dream of creating a nationwide network of committed conservatives, Norquist has helped set up regular meetings of activists in more than forty states, including all the big ones. The following day, at the board meeting, he distributed leaflets encouraging gun owners to attend these local gatherings. Some of the N.R.A. officials seemed dubious. After the meeting broke up, Norquist ran into a fellow board member, Edie Reynolds, who mentioned that she was spending the summer in Vermont. "We have a good meeting up there, and you can go to it," Norquist interjected. "O.K.," Reynolds replied. "But I might find it a bit difficult to get away. I'll be teaching young girls to shoot."



Norquist didn't seem discouraged. On the way back to Washington, he talked about how to build a broad coalition. "If you want the votes of people who are good on guns, good on taxes, and good on faith issues, that is a very small intersection of voters," he said. "But if you say, Give me the votes of anybody who agrees with you on any of these issues, that's a much bigger section of the population." To illustrate what he meant, Norquist drew three intersecting circles on a piece of paper. In the first one he wrote "guns," in the second he wrote "taxes," in the third he wrote "faith." There was a small area where the three circles intersected. "With that group, you can take over the country, if you start with the airports and the radio stations," he said. "But with all of the three circles that's sixty per cent of the population, and you can win politically. And if you add more things, like property rights and home-schooling, you can do even better."

In 1993, with Bill Clinton in the White House, Newt Gingrich, a congressman from Georgia, was promoting himself as a conservative revolutionary. Gingrich had made his reputation attacking Jim Wright, the Democratic Speaker of the House, for ethical lapses, but his indictment of the Washington political system extended to his own party's moderate leadership. For more than a decade, he had been meeting with a group of like-minded activists, Norquist included, every week on Capitol Hill, and expounding on the question Lenin posed: What is to be done? "It was the political equivalent of love at first sight," Norquist recalled of those early days. "Newt walked into the room, and he wanted to do what I wanted to do. He wanted to build a movement to take over the House and the Senate, and he didn't consider this nutty talk."

Some commentators initially regarded Gingrich as a crank, but his idea of writing down a series of core objectives, such as term limits and welfare reform, in a "Contract with America," proved popular with conservatives and voters. Norquist became an enthusiastic proponent of the contract, which he regarded as a logical extension of his tax pledge. On the night of the 1994 midterm elections, he flew to Atlanta, where he joined Gingrich's victory party as exit polls showed that the Georgia congressman was set to succeed Tom Foley as Speaker of the House. After most of the revellers had gone home, Gingrich, Norquist, and about twenty others sat around and ate ice cream as they discussed their grand designs. "It wasn't euphoric—it was strangely calm," Norquist recalled. "It was, like, 'We thought we could do this and we did it. What should we do next?' "

The standard history of the subsequent two years is that Gingrich over-reached and ended up setting back the conservative cause. Norquist has a different interpretation. Although Gingrich was ultimately forced to resign as Speaker, in 1998, his reforms achieved a great deal, Norquist insists, especially the introduction of six-year term limits for committee chairs in the House. "It was the equivalent of what Louis XVI did to the barons," Norquist said. "It neutered people who used to have power. You can't run a coherent and unified movement with thirteen independent power bases." Once term limits were introduced, right-wing Republicans were able to banish the remaining moderates and take over. "The national power base for a governing conservative coalition in this country is the House," Norquist said. "You can govern from the House."

Although he is best known for his activities in Washington, Norquist spends about half of his time on local politics. Many states and cities are facing budget deficits, which, by law, have to be eliminated. Norquist refuses to accept this as a justification for tax hikes. The day after he returned from Texas, he met with some of his staff and discussed what was happening around the country. First, though, he dealt with a housekeeping matter, asking his receptionist, Kelsey Zahourek, how many cups of coffee had been drunk at the previous week's Wednesday meeting.

"Eighty-three cups of coffee were consumed last week," Zahourek replied.

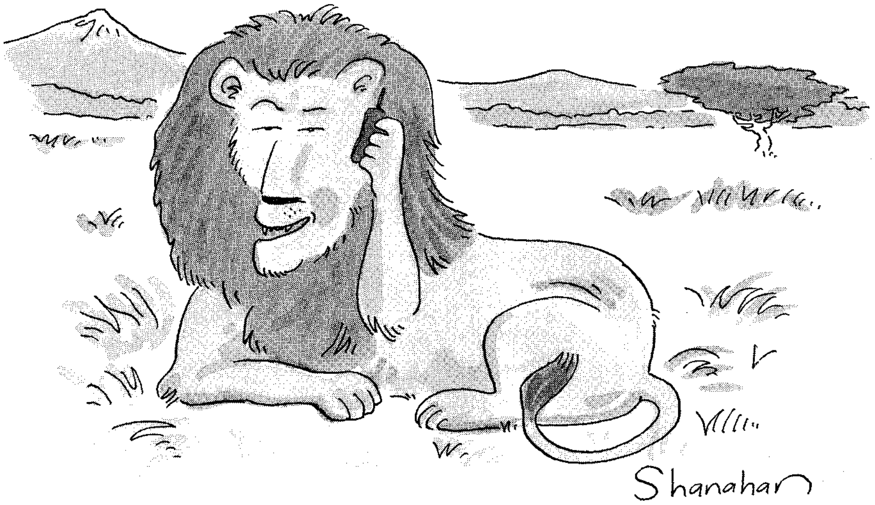
"Are people taking notice of what I said about the size of the cups?" Norquist said.

"Yes," Zahourek replied.

Another member of Norquist's staff, Scott LaGanga, filled him in on recent developments in Montana, Indiana, and North Carolina. Norquist said that the biggest challenge was Virginia, where nineteen Republican legislators who supported a tax increase are up for reëlection this fall, and where he is trying to defeat some of them in the Republican primary. "We only need to win one or two races to send a message," he said. "People say we need to win all of them, but that's not right."

Norquist doesn't hesitate to attack fellow-Republicans. "When you have a brand like Coca-Cola, and you find a rat head in the bottle, you create an outcry," he told me. "Republicans who raise taxes are rat heads in Coke bottles. They endanger the brand." Another place on Norquist's mind was Colorado, where Bill Owens, the Republican governor, was trying to relax limits on state spending. "He was a guy we trusted," Norquist said. "The bad news is he's getting a lot of corporate pukes to support him."

After the meeting ended, Norquist returned a call from a reporter at the *Christian Science Monitor* and lit into Owens and several Republican tax-raisers, including Mitch Daniels, the governor of Indiana, and Bob Riley, the governor of Alabama, making it clear that they would suffer for their apostasy. "The next Republican Presidential candidate will be a Republican governor who did not raise taxes," Norquist said. "People who raise taxes—their aspirations for higher office have been destroyed. Mitch Daniels will never be anybody's Vice-President. Bob Riley will never be President. Bill Owens, who I considered a Presidential contender, he will never be President. He slit his own throat."



"Wear the leopard-print underwear."

• •

Another local politician who incurred Norquist's wrath was Governor George W. Bush, of Texas, when, in 1997, he proposed new sales taxes and fees to make up some of the revenue that would be lost under his plan to cut property taxes. Americans for Tax Reform launched radio ads in Texas attacking the Bush proposal. According to Norquist, Karl Rove was furious, and he accused him of distortion in a phone call. Eventually, they settled their differences: the state legislature forced Bush to eliminate the new taxes from his plan, and Norquist endorsed it. In 1998, when Bush was thinking about running for the White House as a tax-cutting conservative, Rove invited Norquist to Austin. "Karl has never said it to me," Norquist recalled, "but I assumed that he was interested in me because I was one of the few people who could stand up and say to the movement, 'This guy is not a real Bush. He's adopted. He's no relation to that jerk who raised your taxes in 1990.' "

Norquist and Rove started communicating by fax. Norquist would send a list of ideas to Rove, who would mark the ones he agreed with and send it back. In addition to their mutual interest in getting Bush elected, they shared an obsession with political demographics, in how factors such as immigration, the rise of stock ownership, and the development of exurb communities were affecting political affiliations.

During Bush's first term, Norquist

THE EDGES OF TIME

It is at the edges
that time thins.
Time which had been
dense and viscous
as amber suspending
intentions like bees
unseizes them. A
humming begins,
apparently coming
from stacks of
put-off things or
just in back. A
racket of claims now,
as time flattens. A
glittering fan of things
competing to happen,
brilliant and urgent
as fish when seas
retreat.

—*Kay Ryan*

championed the President's tax cuts, dismissing suggestions that they would increase the budget deficit and favor the rich. Before last year's election, Americans for Tax Reform gave a nationwide list of conservative activists to the Bush-Cheney headquarters and acted as an unofficial branch of the campaign. Today, Norquist and Rove communicate by e-mail, and Norquist also speaks regularly with Sara Taylor, the White House's political director. "People like to say, 'Oh, Grover and Rove, they are old college pals. They were in the College Republicans together,' " Norquist said. "Yes, but that's not the reason we work together. We work together because we have the same political aims. We are trying to do the same things. If Karl Rove left the White House tomorrow, I am sure I would have a good relationship with whoever succeeded him, because I am head of the anti-tax movement. If I were run over by a bus, my successor would have a good relationship with the White House. It is about more than personalities."

Recently, however, Norquist has differed with the Administration, particularly over Bush's decision to make Social Security reform his main domestic priority. Norquist supports the privatization plan, but he thinks that the White House blundered politically in believing that it could get legislation passed this year, and in floating several compromise ideas, including significant cuts in future benefits. "The President has put a false step forward in allowing a discussion of future benefit reductions," Norquist said to me in May. "He went away from the successful strategy of 2000, 2002, and 2004, which was: 'I will never cut your benefits. I will never raise your taxes. I will make your children rich.' That was a winning strategy. Right now, you have a President who said he wouldn't negotiate with himself but who's busy negotiating with himself."

In meetings with Bush's advisers, Norquist has registered his objections. "My argument to them is this," he said. "What votes did you get in the Senate for personal accounts by making that concession on benefits? None." Norquist rarely criticizes the White House publicly, and he quickly pointed out that the Bush Administration was making progress in other areas he cares about, such as military-base closures, tort reform, and competitive procurement of government services. However, he didn't hide the fact that he was markedly less optimistic than he had been in November. "Between now and 2006, judges and Social Security swallow everything," he said. "We are looking at six to eighteen months of complete gridlock. And if the Republicans don't do as well as we hope in 2006 we are looking at three years of it."

The gala dinner for Tom DeLay was held at the Capital Hilton. Norquist had bought five tables, at a total cost of ten thousand dollars, but he was attending only the cocktail hour, which had prompted comments that he was distancing himself from DeLay. Before setting out for the dinner, he insisted to me that he wasn't, and that, in any case, reporters had misinterpreted his relationship with the Texan. "He and I don't work together," Norquist said. "I think it's because he thinks I'm a Gingrich guy, and he and Newt aren't close. We don't communicate. O.K.?" Norquist paused and lowered his voice. "Mind you," he went on, "in all good conspiracies there is not necessarily any overt communication. A properly run movement operates the way the U.S. Navy communicates with its submarines. It bangs the rock core of the earth. The vibrations go all around, but only the guys in our subs know what they mean."

Personally, DeLay and Norquist have little in common. DeLay is a devout evangelical Christian who once ran an exterminating company. Norquist, though he tries to hide it, is a cosmopolitan Ivy League intellectual. Still, Norquist thinks that DeLay has been unjustly criticized. "I say to reporters, 'Can you give me the one-sentence description of what DeLay did wrong?' Jim Wright took cash from the Teamsters with phony book sales. Rostenkowski"—the Democratic chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee in the nineteen-eighties and early nineties—"took cash in return for phony stamp sales. These things are wrong. They are clear. What is it that DeLay did? They can stick DeLay and my old friend Jack Abramoff in the same sentence, or the same paragraph, but what is the point? O.K., DeLay goes on a lot of trips. But it is not criminal or dishonest."

A few dozen protesters were encamped across the street from the Hilton. One had brought along a loudspeaker and a fairground test-your-strength machine. "Step right up and win a free trip paid for by lobbyists," he bellowed, offering a big hammer to passersby. Norquist arrived with his new wife, Samah, who is tall and slim, with green eyes and long hair.

Norquist was a bachelor for many years. Most of his friends gave up on his ever getting married; some of his enemies suggested that he was gay. But in 2001 he met Samah, a Palestinian Muslim who was born in Kuwait and moved to the United States at the age of seventeen. The wedding was held at the Lansdowne resort, near Dulles airport. About two hundred people, among them Newt Gingrich and a belly dancer, attended. "I never thought I'd see Grover on the dance floor," Fred Smith, the head of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a right-wing think tank, told me. Peggy Noonan, who was also a guest, sent me this account by e-mail: "It was distinctively Grover in that it was a big jumble—a Christian man marrying a Muslim woman in a ceremony officiated by a rabbi in a hotel in the Virginia countryside. . . . Warm, affectionate, unpretentious. Later I thought that it was like a familial version of the Wednesday group."

Since the wedding, Samah has been redecorating the town house on Capitol Hill where Norquist has lived for four years, and getting rid of some of his junk. She told me that she had already packed away most of his old political posters, and jettisoned his collections of salt and pepper holders and rolls of toilet paper. Toilet paper? "Yes," Norquist interjected. "They were mostly from Eastern Europe—Poland, especially—and they had a lot of cool writing on them and stuff." So far, Norquist added, he had been able to keep his collections of snow globes and airline sick bags.

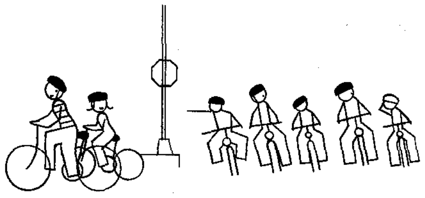
The cocktail party was full of social conservatives. "We try to stop abortions," the Reverend Louis P. Sheldon, the chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition, said to me. "Grover tries to stop the I.R.S. He's had more success than we've had. Money talks." After saying hello to some friends, Norquist slipped out to join a private dinner that he was hosting at his house for Michael Oxley, a congressman from Ohio, who is the chairman of the Financial Services Committee. He missed DeLay, and the greeting to the crowd from Cleta Mitchell, a conservative lawyer who helped organize the event: "Welcome to the vast right-wing conspiracy."

When the speeches began, Dr. Ed Young, DeLay's pastor from Houston, declared, "I'm proud to be in a room with people who make decisions on the basis of Judeo-Christian principles, and not on the basis of what the latest polls tell them." Paul Weyrich, the president of the Free Congress Foundation, described DeLay as a "prayerful, decent person of integrity," and Jesse Helms, speaking on videotape, said, "Tom, hang in there. The conservative movement needs you." DeLay received a standing ovation. Rather than confronting the charges against him, he reviewed the first ten years of conservative rule, noting that the Republicans had cut income taxes, banned partial-birth abortions, and made America safer. Then he poured scorn on his accusers, saying, "The once great party of Roosevelt and Kennedy has become the party of Howard Dean."

Finally, Tony Perkins, the head of the Family Research Council, delivered a benediction. "Heavenly Father," he said, "we are here tonight to thank you for our leader, Tom DeLay. We thank you for him, and we want to pray for him and Christine"—DeLay's wife. "We lift them up before you, and we ask that you put a shield around them. Father, we pray, your own word over them, that no weapon formed against them would prosper. Lord, that every lion tongue would be cast down. And we pray, Lord, that they will come out on the other side of this, servants more usable in your kingdom."

As Norquist's "leave us alone" coalition grows, so does the potential for internal conflict. During President Bush's first term, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and their aftermath helped prevent any outright breaches. With the country threatened and the economy in trouble, there was little appetite for discord. Lately, though, submerged differences have surfaced, as they were sure to do at some point, since the Republican Party now includes rural gun owners and suburban women, Arab doctors and Jewish foreign-policy hawks, big-business free traders and America First protectionists.

If there was one incident that ruptured the façade of unity it was the bipartisan deal in the Senate to preserve the filibuster, which was reached in May, with John McCain, who is likely to run for President in 2008, taking the lead on the Republican side. "What Republican activists see is that a significant number of our people sold out," David Keene told me a couple of days afterward. "The ultimate danger point for the Party is a McCain candidacy. If he runs and gets nominated, there will be a third-party conservative candidate, and the Democrats will probably win."



Norquist was disappointed by the Senate deal, but he didn't say much publicly. In trying to minimize feuding, he concentrates on areas of agreement, such as tax cuts, tort reform, and bashing the Democrats. He has adopted some positions of the religious right, claiming to be anti-abortion, even though that might seem to contradict his libertarianism, and skeptical about evolution. Still, his laissez-faire views on economics and other issues sometimes create tension.

On immigration, for example, his call for a relaxation of existing laws is opposed by traditionalists like Paul Weyrich and Phyllis Schlafly, the president of the Eagle Forum, who have little enthusiasm for another influx of Hispanic, Caribbean, and Asian immigrants, let alone Arabs and Africans. "Phyllis is very anti-immigration and very anti-free-trade," Norquist said. "I think Phyllis's theory is: Foreigners suck." Another of Norquist's causes is broadcasting deregulation. Under the auspices of Americans for Tax Reform, he has set up a Media Freedom Project, which lobbies against censorship of the airwaves. Earlier this summer, L. Brent Bozell III, the founder of the conservative Media Research Center, accused him of doing the bidding of NBC, CBS, and Fox. "Mr. Norquist not only doesn't speak for conservatives on this issue," Bozell wrote in his syndicated column. "He has no idea what conservatives believe."

It is hard to imagine that Norquist would enjoy living in a country run by people like Perkins and Bozell, but he is so caught up in partisan strategizing that he seldom stops to consider the question. "When some people see the religious right, they see an aggressive group that is trying to enact Leviticus on the rest of the country," he said. "What I see is a defensive group that votes against being messed with by other people and the government. The religious right is a parents-rights movement. They want the right to raise their kids in their own way."

This analysis would be more convincing if conservative evangelicals couched their case in libertarian terms, but they don't. Instead, they call for the whole United States to return to its pious Christian roots—statements that Norquist dismisses by arguing that the religious leaders are sometimes more intolerant than their flocks. "The Southern Baptists will be happy in George Bush's America with lower taxes and less regulation," he insisted. "And everybody will be able to go to the pornographic theatre as they see fit."

In addition to religious conservatives and gun owners, Norquist reaches out to many groups not usually associated with the Republican Party. In 1998, he co-founded the Islamic Free Market Institute, and he has been credited with helping to get some of America's six million Muslims behind Bush in the 2000 Presidential election. "When I started out in the Party, nobody was doing Japanese-American relations, nobody was doing Indian relations, and nobody was speaking to Muslims or Orthodox Jews," he said. Norquist sees conservative ethnic and religious communities as natural elements of the Republican coalition. "On politics, they are the same," he insisted. "Theologically, they are not. Each one doesn't think the other is going to Heaven. But what do they want? They want the government to leave them alone, to let them educate their kids, and to not make fun of their faith. All of them want that."

Norquist's efforts to woo religious and ethnic groups have sparked criticism from some hard-line neoconservatives, who have accused him of consorting with Muslim groups that provide financial support for terrorists, claiming that some people associated with the Islamic Free Market Institute have links to terrorist groups. Norquist has denounced the charge as outrageous, and in 2003 he banned one of his accusers, Frank Gaffney, who served in the Pentagon during the Reagan Administration, from his Wednesday meeting. Others have suggested that Norquist, in marrying a Muslim, converted to Islam, which isn't true. "The only way you get thrown out of the meeting is by breaking the rules or by being a racist," Norquist said. "Frank was a despicable racist, and he's out of the meeting. We are either a Republican Party that is open to all ethnic groups and all religions, or we die."

Another group that Norquist has courted is right-leaning gays. Not long ago, I went with him to a meeting of the Virginia branch of the Log Cabin Republicans, where a woman named Laura Sennett, who described herself as a housewife, confronted him about last year's election, when the Republican Party exploited gay marriage as a wedge issue. "It reminded me of Nazi Germany," Sennett, who has a gay family member, said. "What was your reaction?" Norquist looked uncomfortable. Instead of answering directly, he predicted that twenty-three states would pass a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, after which the issue would disappear. Sennett wasn't satisfied. She pressed Norquist again on what he thought of targeting gays, adding, "It's bad, right?" At last, he answered her. "Yes, it's bad," he said. "Democracies are dangerous. Look what happens in California, where they pick on the richest ten per cent."

Encounters like this one don't seem to bother Norquist much. "When you are the governing coalition, you are going to have conflicts—it's inevitable," he said when I asked him about fissures within the Republican coalition. "These guys don't have to sleep together. They don't have to have dinner together. They don't even have to live in the same neighborhoods. They just have to show up on the same day and vote for the same party."

The biggest tribute that has been paid to Norquist is the effort by Democrats to mimic some of his tactics. Since the start of the year, a group of union officials, Hill staffers, academics, journalists, and single-issue activists has been gathering every other Tuesday morning to discuss how to thwart the Bush Administration's agenda, particularly its Social Security plan.

Norquist pays close attention to what the "other team" is doing. In April, he invited George Soros, the billionaire, philanthropist, and, lately, supporter of Democratic causes, such as America Coming Together and MoveOn.org, to a Wednesday meeting. The room was packed. Soros talked about how his family had survived the Holocaust and how he fled from Hungary to England, where he studied philosophy under Karl Popper and embraced the Open Society before emigrating to America. He added, "Post 9/11, I felt the Open Society was under attack from the Bush Administration's war on terror, a war that cannot be won if it is fought as a war."

Norquist asked Soros how much he had spent trying to defeat President Bush. About twenty-seven million dollars, Soros replied. Other questions followed, many of them hostile, about Iraq, Social Security, the role of free markets, and campaign-finance reform. Soros answered them all. Speaking in a thick Hungarian accent, he said that he regarded himself as a moderate Republican, "but moderate Republicans have been practically exterminated in recent years"—a comment that prompted loud cheers. He called the war in Iraq unjustified and counterproductive. Finally, he said he hoped that the Democrats would win the next election and that the Republicans would then return to the center. People looked at him as if he had endorsed infanticide.

After the meeting, Norquist explained why he had invited Soros. "I want to sit him down with some folks on the right who are serious about civil rights and see if there is any common ground. I think he might be interested, because giving money to the A.C.L.U. doesn't mean squat anymore. It can't move any votes on the Hill." In recent months, Norquist has defied the White House by joining a variety of libertarian groups, including the A.C.L.U., in campaigning to get parts of the Patriot Act reformed, particularly the "sneak and peek" clauses that allow the government to examine people's financial, medical, and library records. Why not get Soros to spend some money to support these efforts? Surely he would be interested in getting a return on his political investments.

The one thing that surprised Norquist about Soros's appearance, he told me later, was the revelation that Soros had spent only twenty-seven million dollars during last year's election. "That is so goofy," Norquist said. "The guy is worth, what, seven billion dollars, and he tried to buy the Presidency on the cheap. He should have been in for two and a half billion dollars, for crying out loud. Twenty-seven million dollars—that should have been ante money. What were they thinking?"

Norquist is an expert on the murky area where money and politics intersect. For years, he has helped funnel financial contributions from corporations and rich individuals to Republican candidates and causes, often skirting the campaign-finance laws in the process. Following the 1996 elections, Senator Carl Levin, of Michigan, accused Americans for Tax Reform of laundering roughly five million dollars for the Republican National Committee. Shortly thereafter, state officials in Oregon uncovered a scheme in which wealthy Oregonians sent large sums of money to Americans for Tax Reform, which passed them on to an organization called Oregon Taxpayers United, hiding the identity of the donors. Neither case led to any legal action against Norquist.

In recent years, he has also been involved in the K-Street Project, an audacious attempt by Republican leaders on Capitol Hill, including Tom DeLay and Senator Rick Santorum, of Pennsylvania, to turn the busy thoroughfare where many corporate influence peddlers have their offices into an affiliate of the Republican Party. Republicans have warned lobbying firms not to hire any Democrats or contribute to Democratic causes if they wish to influence legislation. In 1999, Americans for Tax Reform began posting on its Web site information about which candidates and parties individual lobbyists have made contributions to, and Norquist started echoing the DeLay-Santorum line, calling for even the secretaries on K Street to be Republicans.

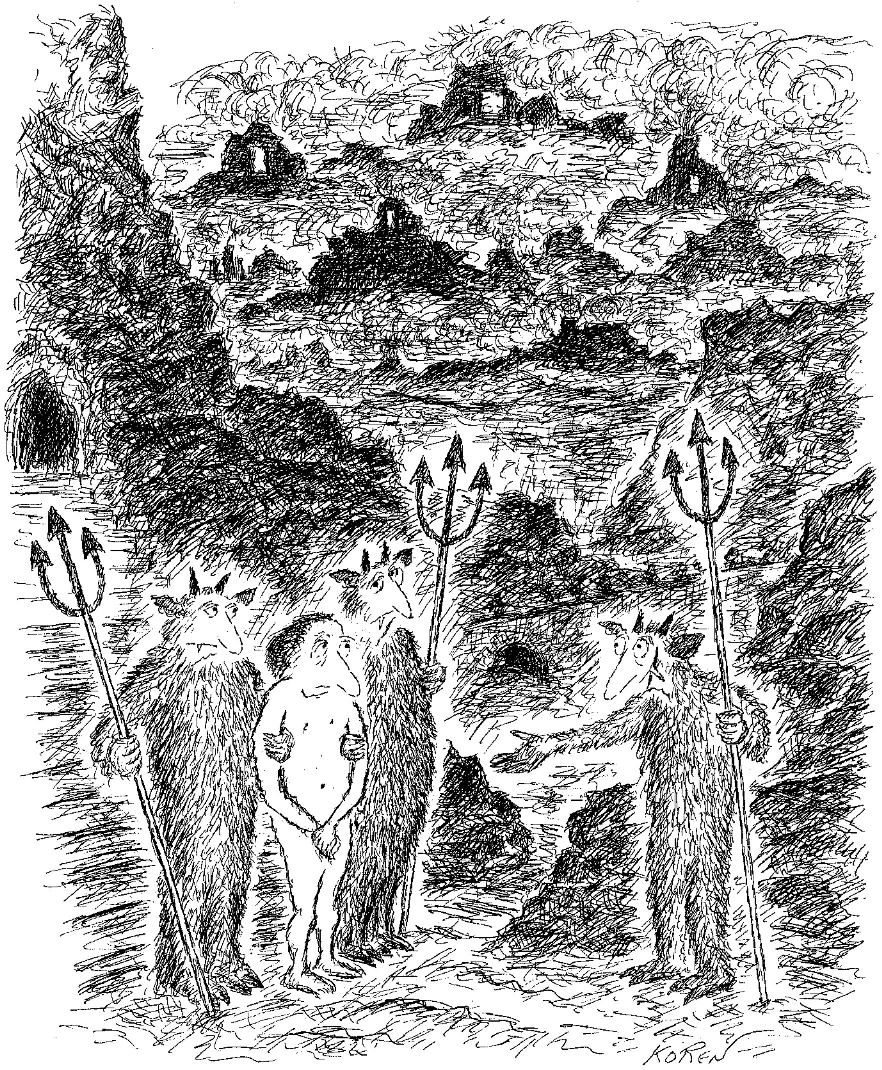
To a large extent, the K-Street Project has succeeded. Many corporations that used to employ lobbyists from both parties in equal numbers now hire mostly Republicans. Citigroup, for example, has only one Democrat on its congressional lobbying staff. Republicans have come to hold key positions in many of the major trade groups, such as the Securities Industry Association and Pharma, which represents big drug companies.

Until 1999, Norquist himself lobbied Congress and the executive branch on behalf of business interests. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, he was either a lobbyist or a consultant for Microsoft, Seagram, the Distilled Spirits Council, and the Interactive Gaming Council. He also registered as a lobbyist for UNITA and for the Seychelles, whose leader, France Albert Rene, was a self-styled leftist. Today, Norquist is no longer officially a lobbyist. He receives a salary of nearly a hundred and seventy thousand dollars, which is modest by the standards of corporate lobbyists, but Americans for Tax Reform, which has a budget of about five million dollars a year, still receives a lot of cash from corporations that stand to benefit from the policies it advocates.

Norquist has always denied pushing legislation in order to attract financial contributions. Recently, however, his motivations have been called into question because of his relationship with Jack Abramoff, whose reputation has been destroyed by revelations that while he was receiving millions of dollars from several Indian tribes, he was privately referring to Indians as "monkeys," "mofos," and "troglodytes."

Last November, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, which is investigating Abramoff's lobbying activities on behalf of the Indian tribes, wrote to Americans for Tax Reform, asking for a long list of documents, including financial records. For years, Norquist has been insisting that Indian territory be exempt from federal taxation, a policy that greatly benefits the tribes that operate casinos there. Meanwhile, it is now clear, Indian tribes have been making generous donations to Americans for Tax Reform, and also, in some cases, using it as a conduit to other conservative groups.

In June, the Indian Affairs Committee released a batch of e-mails detailing how large sums of money appear to have gone from Abramoff's Indian clients to Americans for Tax Reform, and then on to another Republican consultant, Ralph Reed, who is the former head of the Christian Coalition. The electronic trail begins on November 12, 1998, shortly after the midterm election, when Reed writes to Abramoff, "Hey, now that I'm done with electoral politics, I need to start humping



"Hey, it's not all fire and brimstone anymore—one of our nine circles is even smoke-free."

in corporate accounts! I'm counting on you to help me with some contacts. Have you talked to Grover since the Newt development." Gingrich had just resigned as Speaker of the House. "I'm afraid he took a hit on the consulting side with that since so much of it was Newt maintenance but I hope I'm wrong."

By early 1999, Reed's lobbying firm, Century Strategies, was helping Christian groups in Alabama fight legislation that would create a statewide lottery and permit video poker in certain locations. Abramoff's client in neighboring Mississippi, the Choctaw tribe, fearing potential competition, decided to donate more than a million dollars to Reed's campaign, which included costly radio and television spots, but the tribe was hindered by the fact that the Christian groups wouldn't accept casino money. On September 24, 1999, Abramoff wrote a note to himself: "Call Ralph re Grover doing pass through." Eleven days later, he wrote, "Grover and Ralph, we need a check to Ralph by Wednesday."

At the start of 2000, the casino battle intensified. Reed needed more cash, and the Choctaws agreed to supply some. After discussing several options, Reed and Abramoff again decided to send the money via Norquist, but this time, apparently, he kept some of it for Americans for Tax Reform. "I need to give Grover something for helping, so the first transfer will be a bit lighter," Abramoff wrote to Reed on February 7, 2000.

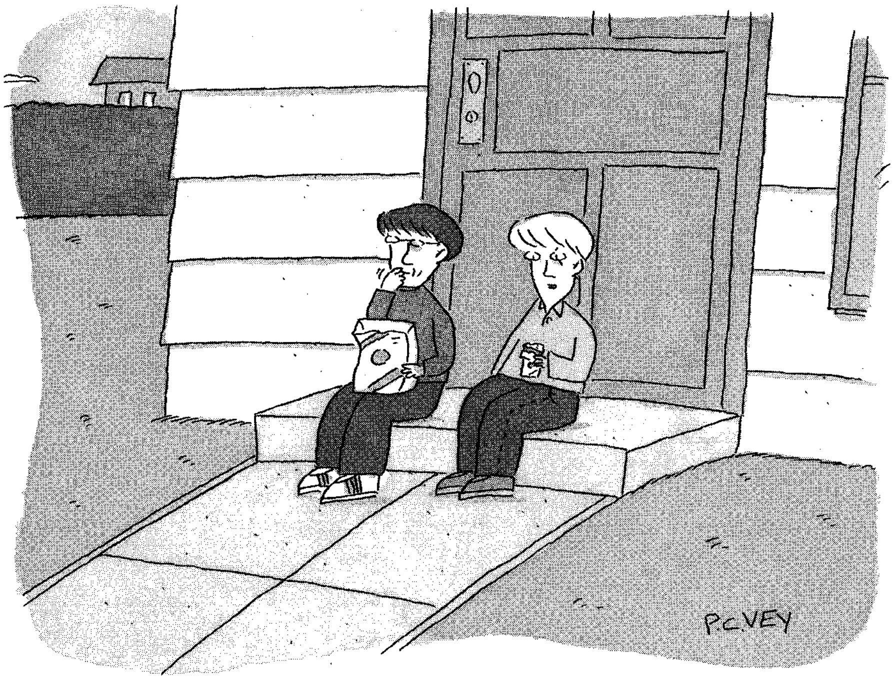
Ten days later, Abramoff sent another e-mail to Reed: "ATR will be sending a second $300K today. How much more do we need? We can't lose this." Once again, Americans for Tax Reform apparently took a cut of the money, prompting Abramoff to write to himself a few days later: "Grover kept another $25K!"

The committee also released correspondence relating to a meeting that Norquist helped organize in May, 2001, at which some of Abramoff's Indian clients met with President Bush. On April 5th, Abramoff wrote to Norquist, "Here's the first of the checks for the tax event at the White House. I'll have another $25K shortly." Sixteen months later, on August 12, 2002, Abramoff wrote to an official with the Saginaw Chippewas, another of his client tribes, "Last year Grover set a meeting for certain select tribal leaders (Coushatta and Chitimach were the only ones) and the speakers of the house of several legislatures to meet with the President in a small meeting for photos, etc. The tribes paid for the event (total cost was $100K for the entire thing, and each tribe put in $50K). Grover has asked me to line up a few tribes to do so again."

Norquist claims that Abramoff's e-mails are misleading and inaccurate. The two payments of twenty-five thousand dollars that Americans for Tax Reform received from the Choctaws in early 2000 were perfectly legitimate and not in any way unusual, he says, since the tribe had long been supportive of the organization's activities—a point confirmed by a Choctaw representative, who told the Indian Affairs Committee that her tribe "routinely made contributions" to Americans for Tax Reform. As for the meetings in the White House, Norquist insists they were part of an existing program to reward local leaders and legislators who supported the Bush Administration's agenda, and not part of some cash-for-access scheme. "No one was invited to Washington or to meet the President as the result of a contribution. Nor did A.T.R. ask anyone for a contribution promising anything or any meeting," Norquist said. "Abramoff's e-mail is just wrong."

So far, there doesn't appear to be any evidence that Norquist has broken the law. Americans for Tax Reform, since it's what is known in Washington as a 501c(4) advocacy group, is entitled to make financial donations to practically any cause it chooses, regardless of where the money originated. "You can say that the laws should be changed, but that is an entirely different matter," Newt Gingrich told me. "You can't criticize people for doing things that are entirely legal. I know parts of the left would like to use this to bring Grover down, but that is not going to happen."

Still, Norquist is trapped between a widening criminal investigation into Abramoff's activities, an inquisitive congressional committee, and an energized press—a deadly triangle that many once prominent Washington figures have disappeared into. On Capitol Hill, there is discussion about what John McCain, the main force behind the Abramoff investigation, will do next. A senior Democratic staffer I spoke with speculated that McCain could be "sitting on a treasure trove of e-mails that would do in Grover" but which he hasn't released because he is "leveraging the information to get Reed to grovel and Grover to help his 2008 primary." McCain, for his part, has said that his only interest is in uncovering wrongdoing and protecting Indian tribes from future ripoffs.



"I love the sense of danger that comes with brushing up against childhood obesity."

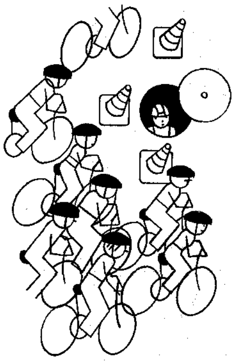
Norquist blames McCain for much of his trouble. In the fall of 1999, when McCain looked as if he might win the Republican nomination for the Presidency, Norquist, Ralph Reed, and other conservative activists organized press conferences in New Hampshire and South Carolina to attack the Senator's work on campaign-finance reform. These attacks coincided with the spread of rumors questioning McCain's mental health and his fitness for the White House. McCain's support ebbed, and he lost South Carolina to George W. Bush. Since then, he and Norquist have been bitter enemies.

"McCain was running as de Gaulle," Norquist recalled. "He said, 'Vote for me. I will lead you.' That is Caesarism. That is completely unacceptable. Add to that, McCain is completely unstable. He throws things. He screams at people. Ask anybody on his staff and they will tell you. Also, remember, McCain is Keating Five. He is the one who had to adopt campaign-finance reform so it wouldn't say on his tombstone that he was part of a major congressional scandal, the S. & L. scandal." If Norquist was worried about McCain and his colleagues on the Indian Affairs Committee, he wasn't showing it. "They are going to go after me, saying, 'Grover and Jack, they are icky,'" he said. "But that's all right." McCain might "whine a lot, but we can deal with that."

McCain declined to comment on Norquist's remarks, but his chief of staff, Mark Salter, said, in a statement, "I doubt the Senator is much troubled by Mr. Norquist's opinion of him. On the contrary, he is pleased that he has never had an association with Mr. Norquist and prefers that it stay that way." Salter also noted, "Senator McCain is not trying to tarnish Grover Norquist's reputation by tying him to Jack Abramoff. By his own admission, Grover couldn't be any closer to Abramoff if they moved to Massachussetts and got married."

The biggest threat that Norquist faces may not be a legal one. For years, he has traded on the fact that other conservative activists looked upon him as an incorruptible outsider. Now his reputation is being attacked even by fellow-conservatives. Last month, *The Weekly Standard*, which is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, described Norquist and Reed as "symbols of how one-time anti-Washington political insurgents traded in their idealism for gobs of corporate cash."

As the scandal plays out, Norquist is keeping as busy as ever. A couple of weeks ago, I drove with him to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he attended a regular meeting of local conservative activists. On the way, he talked about the coming battle over the Supreme Court. Immediately after Sandra Day O'Connor resigned, a number of leading conservatives angered President Bush by warning him not to nominate Alberto R. Gonzales, the Attorney General, because they feared that he, like David Souter, who was nominated by Bush's father, would turn out to be a moderate justice. Norquist backed the White House, telling the dissidents to pipe down.



"One of the things that the President learned from his father and Ronald Reagan was don't raise taxes," Norquist said. "The other was don't screw up Supreme Court appointments. I believe that, as far as is humanly possible, he is going to pick a judge who is like Scalia and Thomas. I trust him on that because he saw what happened when Bush senior picked the wrong judge. Also, if you are not going to get Social Security reform, you are not going to get fundamental tax reform, and you are not going to turn the Middle East into Switzerland, then the thing that people will write about you in fifty years is that the judicial appointments you made really shifted things."

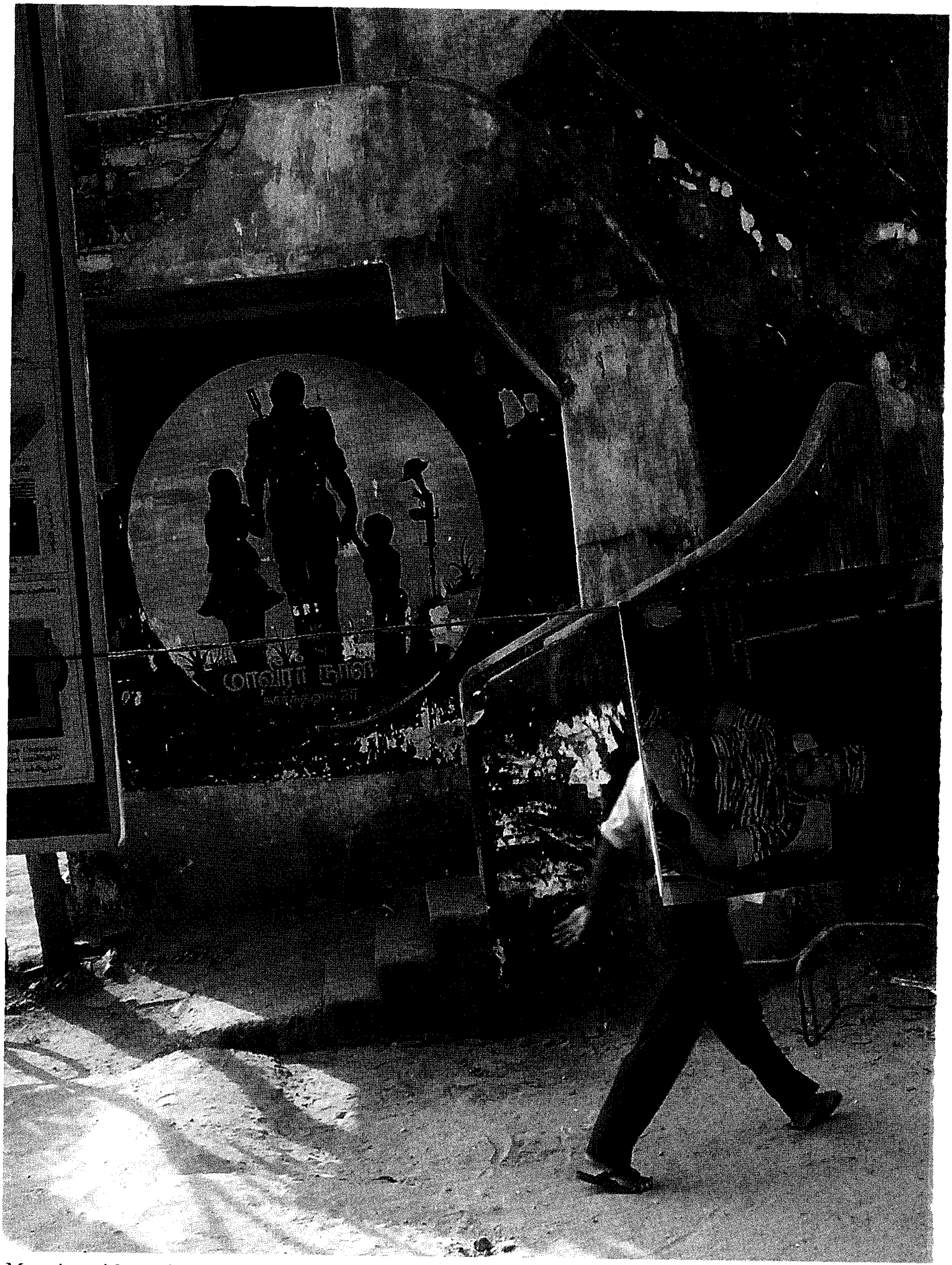
Last week, when President Bush nominated John G. Roberts, a fifty-year-old judge on the federal appeals court, and a member of the Federalist Society, Norquist was elated. "He appears to be a solid person who is at the center of the 'leave us alone' coalition on judicial issues," he said. "This is tremendous progress for conservatives in the legal community." When Tim Goeglein presented the White House's case for Roberts at the Wednesday meeting, nobody stood up to challenge him. "That's a pretty good indication that people are happy with the nomination," Norquist said.

Still, even if Roberts gets confirmed fairly easily, which is what many Washington insiders expect to happen, the conservative campaign to take control of the high court will continue. "The big fight—the Bork-style battle—comes when Ginsberg, Souter, or Stevens steps aside," Norquist said. "That is when the other side will make a stand, and our side will push for victory."

Norquist prides himself on taking the long view and accepting occasional setbacks. On Social Security, for example, he now thinks that it might take until after the election of 2008, or even 2010, for the Bush agenda to triumph, but he sees reform as inevitable, and he predicts that the private savings accounts will ultimately become known as "W" accounts. "Ronald Reagan won the Cold War in 1991—three years after he left office," he said. "You don't have to be there physically to get the credit."

One evening recently, Norquist attended a dinner for the New York State Conservative Party at the New York Sheraton at which he was praised by Governor Pataki. Partly owing to Norquist's efforts, Pataki told the crowd, even liberal New York Republicans now thought twice before raising taxes. Karl Rove was the event's honoree. He caused some controversy by saying that after September 11th some liberals and Democrats wanted to offer "therapy" to the attackers. But most of his speech was taken up with a triumphalist analysis of political realignment. Harking back to 1964, when Barry Goldwater was defeated in a landslide and "we were relegated to the political wilderness," Rove claimed that conservatism was now "the guiding philosophy in the White House, the Senate, the House, in twenty-eight governorships, and the majority of state legislatures."

After the dinner and a photograph with Rove, Norquist walked uptown, to the Time Warner Center, where several hundred people had gathered to honor Milton Friedman, the free-market economist, who is ninety-two. The fact that New York could support two such benefits in one night, Norquist said, testified to Rove's point about the strength of the conservative movement. Then, as usual, he ran into somebody he knew. "How's it going?" the woman asked him. Norquist didn't hesitate. "We're winning," he replied. ♦



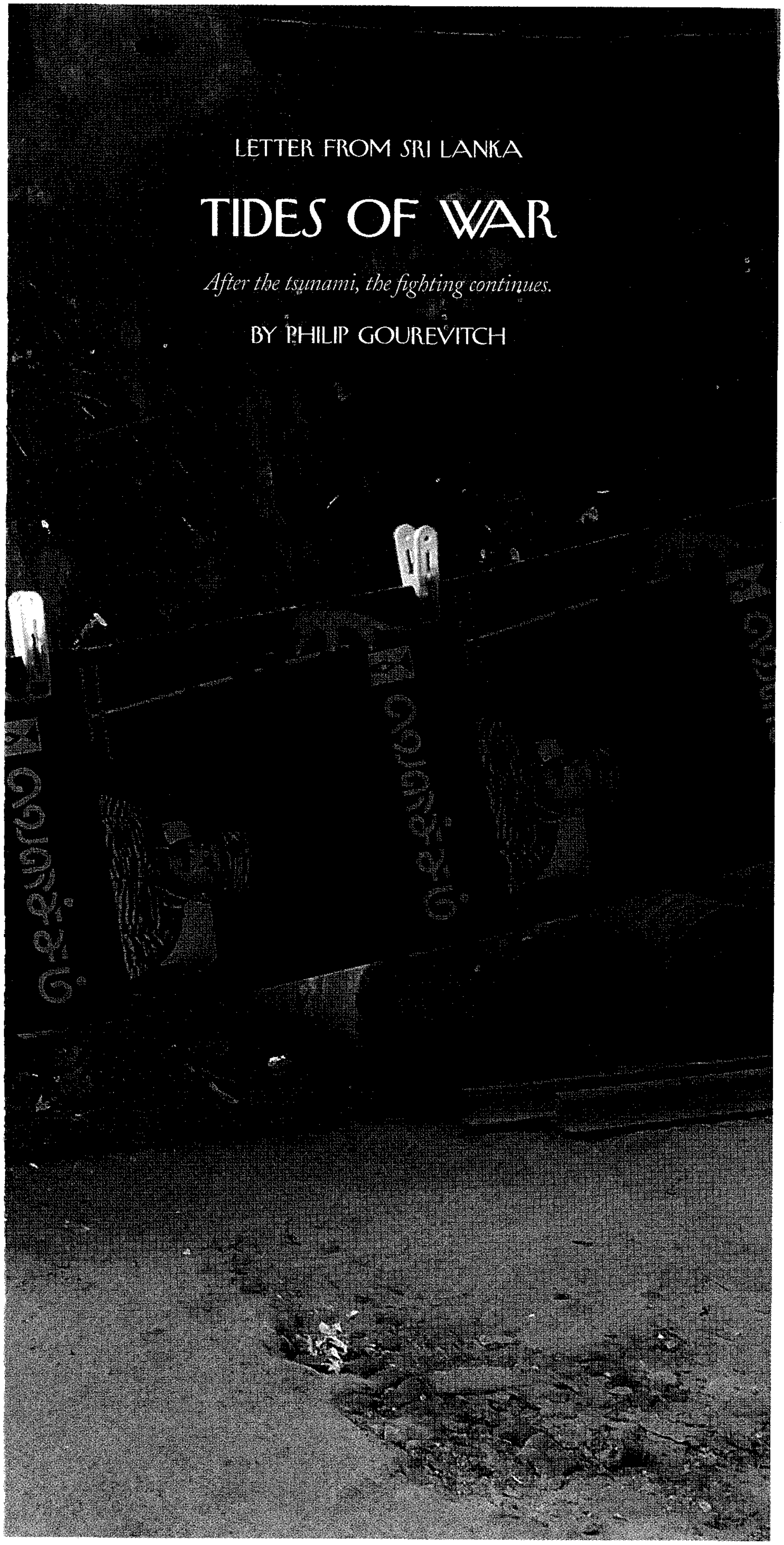
Magazines with cover images of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the secessionist Tamil Tigers, are sold by the roadside in a regio

LETTER FROM SRI LANKA

TIDES OF WAR

After the tsunami, the fighting continues.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH



f northern Sri Lanka controlled by the Tigers. Photograph by Thomas Dworzak.

MAGNUM

There was talk in Sri Lanka, not long after the tsunami, of an expensive coffin heading north. The story appeared in the press and was passed on in conversation, unencumbered by any trace of verifiable reality: *Did you hear . . . a coffin, very fancy . . . what to think?* Perhaps such a coffin existed, perhaps not. More than thirty thousand people had been killed on the island in the space of a few minutes when the Indian Ocean rose up and surged ashore under a bright, cloudless sky on the morning after Christmas; and Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the secessionist Tamil Tigers, who control a sizable swath of northern Sri Lanka, had not been seen or heard from since. The coastal town of Mullaittivu, where Prabhakaran had his military headquarters in a network of underground bunkers, had been largely erased by the sea. An announcer on the state-owned radio, the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, speculated hopefully that, if so much of Mullaittivu was gone, perhaps its most notorious resident might be, too. For thirty years, since he took up arms against the government, which is dominated by the island's Sinhalese Buddhist majority, Prabhakaran, the self-styled Sun God of the Tamil Hindu minority, has been the defining figure of Sri Lankan history—a wearying chronicle of civil war, assassination, and terror. For a country dumbfounded by the senseless loss of life along its coasts, the rumor of the northbound coffin attached to the mystery of his absence to suggest the possibility of a single meaningful death.

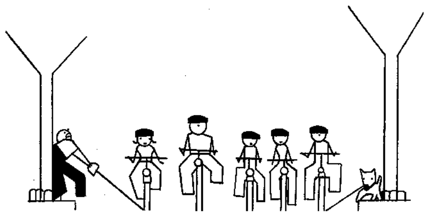
Prabhakaran, who turned fifty last year, is one of the most bloody-minded and effective warlords in today's crowded field. Osama bin Laden is more infamous, on account of Al Qaeda's global reach and sensational operations, but Prabhakaran and his Tigers, in their determination to carve out an independent Tamil state in the north and east of Sri Lanka, have been every bit as bold. The Tigers, whose extremist ethnic nationalism is essentially secular, are often credited with inventing suicide bombing, and although that claim is surely exaggerated, they did develop the sort of explosive suicide vests favored by Palestinian terrorists, and they refined the technique of using speedboats as bombs to ram large ships, which was employed in 2000 by Al Qaeda agents in Yemen against the U.S.S. Cole. In 1991, long before female suicide bombers became a fixture of Middle Eastern terrorism, the Tigers deployed the woman who blew up India's Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. That was Prabhakaran's most notorious hit, but his suicide squad of Black Tigers has claimed more than two hundred and sixty bombings in the last two decades—an average rate of nearly one a month—injuring and killing thousands of people, the great majority of them civilians. "Of course we use suicide bombers," a Tiger official who was overseeing humanitarian relief for displaced tsunami survivors near Mullaittivu told me. "Because, as a revolutionary organization, we have limited resources."

Prabhakaran depicts his struggle as a quest to reclaim his people's historic homeland, but the idea of secession is actually a relatively recent phenomenon, a response to the government's discriminatory policies and its complicity in communal violence against Tamils during the decades following Sri Lanka's independence, in 1948, from British colonial rule. Until the early nineteen-eighties, most Tamils favored the establishment of a federal system that would grant them substantial local autonomy within a unified state; and, even as hope for a political solution gave way to Tamil militancy, armed struggle was widely seen as a means to force such an outcome. Prabhakaran, however, has always been hostile to the idea of power-sharing. He proclaims himself and his Tigers to be the only true representatives of Tamil political aspirations and has waged a systematic campaign—every bit as relentless as his war against the state—to eliminate Tamil rivals. Nevertheless, the Tigers have consistently had to resort to the forced recruitment of Tamil children, a practice barely distinguishable from outright abduction, to fill their fighting ranks and replenish their suicide brigades.

In Sinhalese, the name Sri Lanka means "blessed land," and in its physical aspects the country is a tropical paradise, hemmed by palm-shaded beaches and, in its interior, fragrant with the florid vegetation of astonishingly varied landscapes—salt marshes and mountain lakes, mist-shrouded tea plantations, glimmering paddies, and mahogany jungles. The contrast between the island's natural attractions and its repellently violent history was thrown into stark relief by the tsunami, which killed half as many people in one blow as three decades of war and terror had claimed. Yet this devastation was perfectly arbitrary, and it is a measure of the depth of Sri Lanka's troubles that for this reason the tsunami was widely regarded there not only as a disaster but also as an occasion for hope.

The President, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, articulated this unlikely optimism when she addressed the nation two days after the tsunami. Sri Lanka, she declared, had been "incredibly humbled" by the waves, which had dealt death and destruction to all ethnic groups indiscriminately. Never mind that Sinhalese, who count for nearly seventy-five per cent of the island's twenty million inhabitants, outnumber Tamils by roughly four to one, and that Tamils, in turn, outnumber the next largest minority group, Muslims, by three to one. "Nature does not differentiate in the treatment of peoples," the President said, and she urged Sri Lankans to follow nature's example. In fact, many had responded to the disaster by rushing to the aid of the afflicted without regard for their identity. There were stories of Sinhalese soldiers risking—and losing—their lives in efforts to rescue Tamil civilians; of Tamil businessmen carting meals to displaced Sinhalese survivors; and of Muslims buying up clothes and medicines to hand out to Hindus and Buddhists. It was only later that Sri Lankans had time to register their surprise at their own unthinking decency, and their relief at this discovery was compounded by a sense that the tsunami had saved the country from an imminent return to war.

Although a ceasefire between the government and the Tigers has held since early 2002, peace talks broke down the next year—with the Tigers demanding what amounts to self-rule, and the government refusing to grant it—and, in the unhappy deadlock that followed, both parties have been riven by internal disputes. On the government side, President Kumaratunga forged a new ruling coalition in April of last year with the People's Liberation Front (known by its Sinhalese initials as the J.V.P.), a small but aggressively divisive Communist party, which spikes its Marxism with an extremist strain of Sinhalese nationalism and Buddhist supremacism, and regards concessions to the Tigers as tantamount to treason. Kumaratunga, who first allied with the J.V.P. in 2001, has acknowledged that her affiliation with the party was a devil's bargain, made to retain power. This political realignment in Colombo, the capital, coincided with an armed revolt against Prabhakaran by one of his top commanders, a man known by the nom de guerre Colonel Karuna, who drew his support from his home area in eastern Sri Lanka, where Tamils had long felt exploited and ill served by the Tiger leadership. Karuna's aim was to secure autonomy for eastern Tamils from both the Tigers and the government, and although he could not prevail militarily against Prabhakaran, he remains at large—in hiding, and probably in exile—and the Tigers have been unable to reëstablish dominion over large areas of the east. Karuna's rebellion dramatized the threat that peace poses to Prabhakaran's authority, and a month before the tsunami struck, when Prabhakaran delivered his annual Hero's Day speech, he declared himself fed up with the stalemate.



The Hero's Day oration, which is delivered at night, in a cemetery for martyred Tigers, lit by flaming torches, is often Prabhakaran's only significant public utterance in the course of a year, and his pronouncements have come to be seen as oracular. "We are living in a political void, without war, without a stable peace, without the conditions of normalcy, without an interim or permanent solution to the ethnic conflict," he began. He accused President Kumaratunga of rejecting the prospect of peace through her "unholy alliance" with the J.V.P. The Sinhalese and the Tamils, he said, were more polarized than ever—"two separate peoples with divergent and mutually incompatible ideologies, consciousness, and political goals"—and he concluded, ominously, "There are borderlines to patience and expectations. We have now reached the borderline." In the weeks before Christmas, assassinations and attacks involving Prabhakaran's forces and Karuna sympathizers escalated steadily in the east. Some Sri Lankans cancelled vacations in order to be at home if the war resumed; others made plans to leave the country.

"We were running at the rate of about

"And that's your great-grandfather. He was a coward and a thief."

a murder a day until the tsunami came along," Father Harry Miller, an American Jesuit missionary in the devastated east-coast city of Batticaloa, told me. Batticaloa, and the surrounding province, which shares its name, was the epicenter of Karuna's rebellion, a predominantly Tamil region where the ceasefire lines describe a confusing patchwork of government and Tiger territories. For dozens of miles before you reach Batticaloa city on the two-lane road that links it to Colombo—a slow, eight-hour drive away—the scrubby bush is punctuated by heavily fortified Army camps, and a pervasive military presence makes the government-controlled town feel like a place under occupation. Miller had heard the rumors that Prabhakaran might be dead, but he was not surprised when the Tiger leader reappeared in mid-January, without a word of consolation for his people's losses. Miller did not share President Kumaratunga's view of the tsunami as a cosmic corrective to what she called "a country where every aspect of life has been politicized," much less as a providential opportunity. The prevailing sentiment in Batticaloa, he said, was "We are victims again. We've had flood, we've had wars, we've had drought, we've had a cyclone. Victims again."

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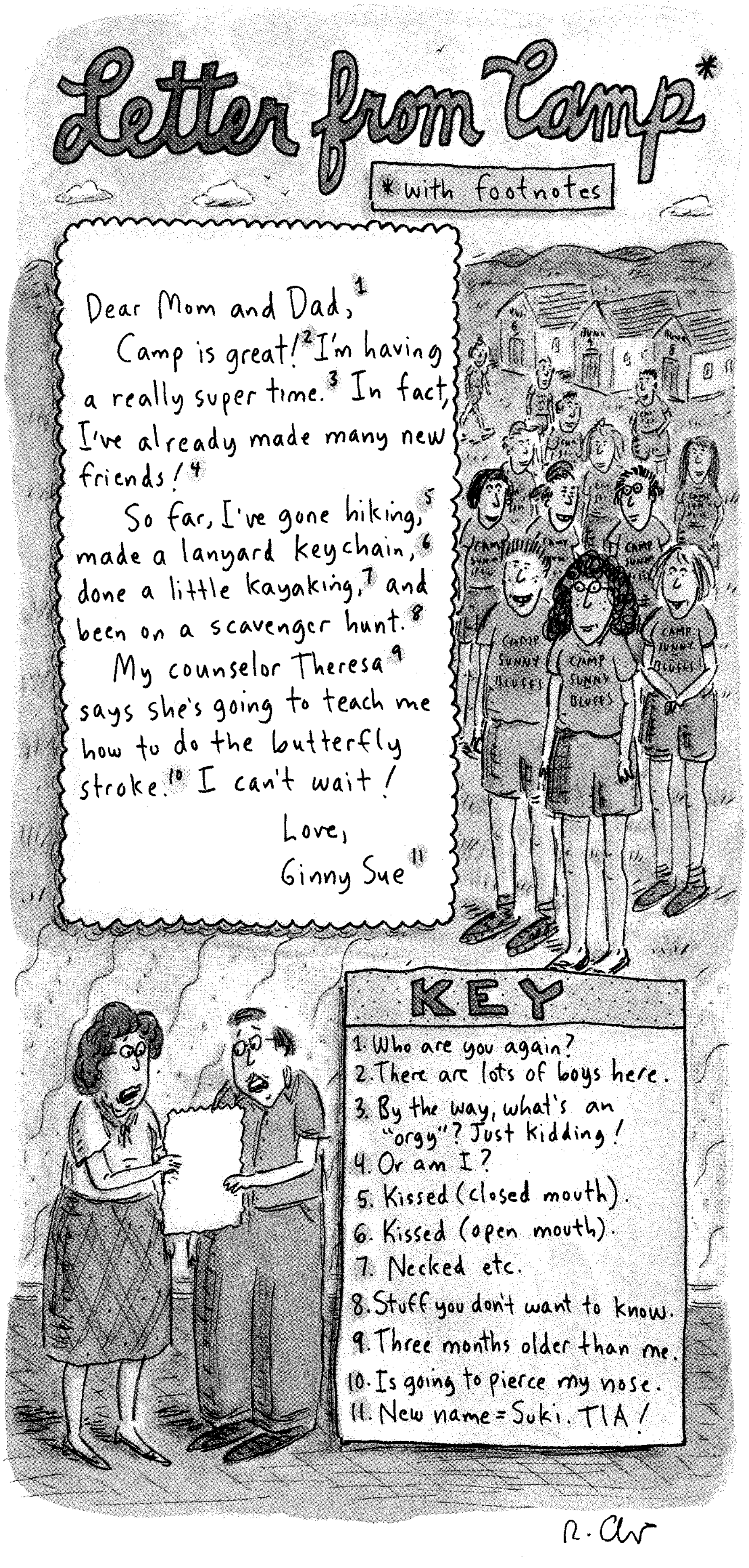
The defining catastrophe of post-colonial Sri Lankan history was an act of man, a law, promulgated in 1956, when the island was still called Ceylon. The law established Sinhalese as the sole official language (a status previously reserved for English). Sri Lanka's Sinhalese and Tamils both trace their origins to migrations from India, and, despite their different languages and religions, their coexistence had previously been untroubled by ethnic violence. The 1956 law, however, effectively transformed the parliamentary democracy into an instrument of Sinhalese nationalism and excluded Tamils and other minorities from careers in public service, access to many educational opportunities, and other rights and privileges to which citizenship supposedly entitled them.

The man behind the law was President Kumaratunga's father, Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the scion of a Sinhalese noble family, who was raised an Anglican and educated at Oxford. Although Bandaranaike had converted to Buddhism as a young man, he spoke English with greater ease than he did Sinhalese. In fact, he had to brush up on his native language before campaigning as a populist opposition leader, who mixed leftist rhetoric with nativism in order to tap the resentment of ordinary Sri Lankans toward the class from which he came, the British-educated élite. His Sinhalese-only policy coincided with celebrations in honor of the twenty-five-hundredth anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment, and scholars tend to regard Bandaranaike's alienation of the Tamils as inadvertent. "He could just as well have included the Tamil poor in that anti-English campaign," the human-rights lawyer Radhika Coomaraswamy told me in Colombo. Coomaraswamy is a Tamil, and she said, "I don't see anti-Tamil sentiment at the core of the original Sinhalese nationalism. Tamils were just ignored, which may be an even greater insult."

Bandaranaike was unprepared when outraged Tamils took to the streets to protest the law and were met with violence from Sinhalese inflamed by the jingoism he had preached. Tamils were beaten (some of them to death), their homes were set ablaze, and their businesses were ransacked. Bandaranaike could not undo the damage. In 1957, he negotiated a pact with Tamil federalists that met many of their demands for regional autonomy. Sinhalese hard-liners protested, and in 1958 he repudiated the pact, and the country was again swept by violence, of which Tamils were overwhelmingly the victims. A year and a half later, Bandaranaike was shot dead by an apparently deranged Buddhist monk.

Bandaranaike was succeeded, the following year, by his widow, Sirimavo—the world's first female Prime Minister—who offered concessions to Tamil federalists and won their support during her campaign, then turned her back on them, triggering mass protests in the northern city of Jaffna. In 1962, the Army was sent in to quell the unrest, and although there was little violence between Sinhalese and Tamils during the next decade, the dispiriting effect of militarization in the north, coupled with official discrimination, was such that a generation of Tamils grew up with an acute sense of disenfranchisement. In the early nineteen-seventies, Sirimavo Bandaranaike hardened these feelings by elevating Buddhism to the equivalent of a state religion and by imposing harsh quotas on the number of


Letter from Camp*
* with footnotes
Dear Mom and Dad,¹
Camp is great!² I'm having a really super time.³ In fact, I've already made many new friends!⁴
So far, I've gone hiking,⁵ made a lanyard keychain,⁶ done a little kayaking,⁷ and been on a scavenger hunt.⁸
My counselor Theresa⁹ says she's going to teach me how to do the butterfly stroke.¹⁰ I can't wait!
Love,
Ginny Sue¹¹
CAMP SUNNY BLUFFS
KEY
1. Who are you again?
2. There are lots of boys here.
3. By the way, what's an "orgy"? Just kidding!
4. Or am I?
5. Kissed (closed mouth).
6. Kissed (open mouth).
7. Necked etc.
8. Stuff you don't want to know.
9. Three months older than me.
10. Is going to pierce my nose.
11. New name = Suki. TIA!
R. Chast

Tamil students admitted to state universities. In the late sixties, half the students admitted to university programs in engineering and medicine were Tamils; by the end of the next decade, that number was closer to twenty per cent. In 1975, Velupillai Prabhakaran staged what he called his "first major military encounter," when he shot and killed the mayor of Jaffna, a close associate of the Prime Minister's, who had been on his way to pray at a Hindu temple.

Tamil militants had attempted to assassinate their politicians before, but none had succeeded, and Prabhakaran's example inspired others to take up arms in the name of Tamil self-determination. Some joined his tiny band of Tigers, who supported themselves by robbing banks and smuggling weapons from India. Others enlisted with competing Tamil guerrilla factions, which began claiming credit for assassinations and ambushes of politicians, policemen, and soldiers. Sinhalese agitators set off a new wave of anti-Tamil riots in 1977, and again in 1981, when the Jaffna library—the major repository of Tamil literature and history—was burned to a shell. Then, in July of 1983, the Tigers staged a carefully planned ambush of government forces near Jaffna, massacring thirteen officers. As news of the slaughter spread, the country was convulsed by the most hideous pogrom in its history, a wave of anti-Tamil violence so extreme that observers reached back to the horrors that accompanied India's partition, in 1947, for a fitting comparison.

As many as two thousand Tamils were hacked, bludgeoned, torched, or beaten and kicked to death by mobs. In Colombo, Sinhalese criminals in the high-security Welikade prison were allowed to slaughter dozens of Tamil political prisoners, and two days later another massacre of Tamils occurred in the same prison. Nearly eighty thousand Tamils fled their homes to hastily established refugee camps during those weeks, which became known as Black July; others piled into boats to seek asylum in India—the first great wave of an exodus that has, over the intervening decades of war, created a global diaspora of hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils. Some Sinhalese were so disgusted by the horrors of 1983 that they, too, left the country. Johnny Attygale, a businessman whose father had served as Sri Lanka's police commissioner in the sixties, told me that he had been driving to the beach when a couple of frenzied Tamils appeared in front of his car, pursued by a lynch mob. He packed the men into his trunk and drove them to safety, then packed up his family and moved to Australia. "Bodies on the road, people being burned in the street—how do you explain that to your kids?" he asked.

To Prabhakaran, Black July was an affirmation of the Tiger cause—proof that the only hope for Sri Lankan Tamils was to establish an independent homeland by force. "The July holocaust has united all sections of the Tamil masses," he declared, and Tamil militants took to comparing their struggle to that of Palestinian nationalists and anti-apartheid South Africans. India's Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, faced with a flood of Sri Lankan refugees and with discontent among sympathetic Indian Tamils, decided to train and arm Sri Lanka's Tamil militants (not only Tigers but a number of other factions as well). India's support for the rebels inspired more young Tamils to join the separatist fight, and Sri Lankans date the beginning of civil war to 1983, the year when the state's claim to be the representative government of all the island's people appeared most thoroughly discredited. Yet, as with so many armed liberation movements, the more the Tigers pressed their advantages and consolidated their power as a military and political force, the more they came to resemble—and then to exceed—the most repellent aspects of their enemies. Thirty years after Prabhakaran shot and killed the mayor of Jaffna, he is probably the world's most prolific political assassin. But the paradox of his monomaniacal pursuit of a Tamil homeland is that Tamils have borne the brunt of his violence.

Father Miller came to Sri Lanka from his home parish of New Orleans in 1948. "It was a brand-new nation with a beautiful administrative structure," he told me. "The British did a good job. They had trained people who knew how to keep accounts and write and type and file and everything else. There were people who'd studied in Oxford and Cambridge, and people trained at Sandhurst." Tea, rubber, and coconut plantations sustained a developing economy; a reliable rail system served the entire island; and most of the country was electrified. "We used to call Bangladesh bad off," Miller said. "We called them the basket case over the years. They never seemed to be able to get their act together. We've got to their stage now. They've gone forward, we've fallen back."

Miller was an undergraduate at Spring-hill College, a Jesuit school in Mobile, Alabama, when he volunteered as a missionary, and he packed his bags knowing that he was committing himself for life. Except for a stint in India in the early fifties, to complete his theological training, and a few years in other parishes in Sri Lanka, he has made his home in Batticaloa, teaching primary and secondary school—and for a decade serving as rector—at St. Michael's College, which is housed in a large Italianate building of ochre stucco and colonnaded terraces beneath red tile roofs, where he lives in a tower room, atop a steep and rickety wooden staircase. The office area of his L-shaped room is sparsely furnished, and the walls are barely adorned—a few pictures of Jesus hang on nails, along with a cross and a crude folk-art mask. His living quarters are even more ascetic: there is a narrow cot, a hot plate and washstand, and a clothesline, which, when I visited, was draped with a duplicate of the outfit he was wearing—a threadbare polo shirt and hiking shorts. Beneath his desk chair, a wooden prayer kneeler supported Miller's sandalled feet. He is a small, vigorous man, with thick workman's hands and a face that might fairly be called Roman on account of its sharp-featured, weathered intensity. Despite his Louisiana roots, he has a New England accent (a peculiarity he acknowledges yet cannot account for), but the most striking feature of his speech is the way he uses the first-person plural when describing the Batticaloa Tamil community, with which he has come to identify. "I've been here long enough," he said. "I say 'we' when I talk locally."

In the early days of the war, Miller told me, "one of the Sri Lankan colonels here gave me a nickname. I was a white Tiger, because I was always arguing the side of the Tamil people against the government." At that time, in the early eighties, the fighting was all in the north. But the government regarded Batticaloa as enemy territory nonetheless, Miller said, "and they came in and started arresting people right and left, in great numbers." Miller joined with other community leaders to document and contest instances of government abuse. In 1990, when the Tigers seized control of large areas of Batticaloa, Miller took to hounding them even more. "I object to both sides, and I'm talking on behalf of the people who are victims," he said. He was particularly incensed by the Tigers' forced conscription of Tamil children. "They had put in a rule," he explained. "Each family must give one child. And they were exacting that." He told me that when he went to the local Tiger commander to complain about a thirteen-year-old girl with a game leg and a fifteen-year-old boy with a terrible lung condition who had been taken from their families as recruits, the commander told him, "I don't have time for these minor matters."

Miller's sympathy for Tamil grievances was equalled by his disdain for the Tigers. "That leader, Prabhakaran, is a megalomaniac, and in anybody's books a mass murderer," he said. "Let me tell you one story. Mother and father have about five kids—three of them are girls, boys are younger fellows—and the Tigers go to the house, and say, 'You've got to give us one of the children.' The mother says, 'Never, never.' The father says, 'What are we going to do? We have to give them one of the children, that's all—we don't have a choice.' One day when the woman was away from home, they came and he was there, and he let one of the girls go. And the mother came back and she said, 'Where's the kid?' And he said, 'Well, they came and took her.' She said, 'You gave her?' He said, 'Yeah, what?' She said, 'That's not even your child.' Now, they were not getting on well, and when she said, 'That's not even your child,' he went out and committed suicide. That's the level of pressure that they were able to put on people."

The Tiger commander in Batticaloa was Colonel Karuna, and when he turned against Prabhakaran, last year, the recruitment of children in his zone stopped. His declaration of independence inspired a number of Batticaloans to take to the streets and show their support by setting fire to the portraits of Prabhakaran that Karuna's men had, until the day before, required them to hang in their homes, and, before he went into hiding, Karuna disbanded the children's brigades. "He sent them home," Miller said. "The Tigers tried to get them back. They were going around in some of the villages with loudspeakers: 'We'd like to talk to you again, we need to bring things up to date, at least come and have a discussion with us.' " The tactic didn't work, but shortly after the tsunami UNICEF reported that Tiger recruiters were luring children from displaced-persons camps in the east.

Father Miller wasn't surprised. "Deep down inside, people realize that we haven't crossed that border yet to where we can say that there's going to be peace," he said. "We're going to go on killing each other, and there may come some time when it becomes so totally desperate that we get some good sense. I'm an optimist."

"Ceylon—the radiant, incomparable East," Mark Twain wrote when he paid a brief visit to the island in 1896, and his rhapsodic response to the place was typical of travellers' accounts through the years:

> All the requisites were present. The costumes were right; the black and brown exposures, unconscious of immodesty, were right; the juggler was there, with his basket, his snakes, his mongoose, and his arrangements for growing a tree from seed to foliage and ripe fruitage before one's eyes; in sight were plants and flowers familiar to one in books but in no other way—celebrated, desirable, strange, but in production restricted to the hot belt of the equator; and out a little way in the country were the proper deadly snakes, and fierce beasts of prey, and the wild elephant and the monkey. And there was that swoon in the air which one associates with the tropics, and that smother of heat, heavy with odors of unknown flowers, and that sudden invasion of purple gloom fissured with lightnings—then the tumult of crashing thunder and the downpour—and presently all sunny and smiling again.

You could find much the same sort of gushing, albeit less memorably rendered, in most of the leading travel magazines last year: feature after feature touting Sri Lanka, post-ceasefire, as a hot (in every sense of the word) destination, where the suspended war provided a titillating whiff of adventure. Sri Lankans are prone to similar raptures about the Edenic luxuriance of their land. Their literature—heat-stunned and gin-soaked—is full of an aching auto-exoticism. Yet this fond self-regard contains a painful element of what another Southern writer, William Faulkner, called "a furious unreality," and nowhere is it more furious or unreal than in the Tiger-controlled territory.

To get there, you must cross what amounts to an international frontier in the middle of the kilometre-wide no man's land that bisects the island from coast to coast along the ceasefire line. Although the government of Sri Lanka refuses to recognize it, the Tigers have established their own state, with customs officials, a border control, a uniformed police force, and a full complement of ministries. The sheds on the Tiger side of the border crossing, where travel documents are examined, are plastered with posters celebrating the exploits of suicide bombers, and staffed by uniformed female cadres with braided pigtails looped and gathered on their heads, like helmets. The landscape on this side is indistinguishable from the rest of Sri Lanka, except that it is so sparsely populated as to seem abandoned, which in large stretches it is. The war damage is most striking in Kilinochchi, the political and economic capital of the Tiger zone. Three years ago, when the truce went into effect, there was hardly a roof left on any structure along Kilinochchi's main drag, and even now, after a fever of reconstruction, largely funded by overseas Tamil supporters of the war they have fled, ruins are everywhere. There are few private cars on the road, and a good many of them are archaic Morris Minors, jerry-rigged to run on kerosene, at perilously slow speeds. At the center of town, a side street leads to a complex of ultramodern hotel-like buildings, which make up the various departments of the Tigers' political commissariat. Here, the conspicuous absence of visible security measures—no guns or guards—signals the confidence of absolute authority.

Tiger apparatchiks are notoriously wary of the press. But after the tsunami they launched a charm offensive on foreign reporters, earning highly favorable reviews of the efficiency with which they orchestrated relief efforts. So, one evening, I was granted an audience with the head of the Tigers' political wing, S. P. Tamilchelvan, a slight, heavily mustached man, who is considered to be second only to Prabhakaran in the hierarchy. Tamilchelvan walks with a limp and the help of a cane, on account of an old combat injury. He does not speak English, or pretends not to (he clearly understands it). He received me in a bitterly air-conditioned conference room and was accompanied by his translator, George, an elderly rail of a man, who was extravagantly groomed, with gray hair slicked fiercely back, and profusions of equally gray hair sprouting from his ears in carefully combed tufts several inches long. George's English was as eccentric as his coiffure. When I posed a question—for instance, why had Prabhakaran failed to appear for weeks after the tsunami, giving rise to suspicions that he had been killed?—Tamilchelvan would answer at great length in Tamil, and then George would deliver his own baroque stem-winder:

> This is a story that has been in the spin for quite some time, not just since the tsunami but for two decades. Disappearance of the national leader takes place so many times, and people kill him several times, and there is a concerted effort on the part of the media in Colombo, and some racial elements in Colombo, political elements who have a wishful thinking of that to happen. So these are all planted by interested parties. Now we must understand the structure of the Liberation Tigers organization, the efficacy of the structure. How did it happen for a guerilla movement to transform itself into such a conventional army and while at the same time maintain structures that have been formulated to meet the day-to-day requirements of the people in a void that was made by the government's absence to do such things during the past twenty-five years? So efficacy of the structures is now indicated by the leader's commands being taken into account immediately, and the response that came forward from all the units of the Liberation Tigers organization. And one walks into the street and sees how efficiently the mechanism is functioning. . . . Our leader never cares to pose for photographs in occasions, and show the world that he is living and he is distributing and he is participating in the effort. Those are all done within a framework that he himself has formulated. . . . A totally unprecedented contingency like this has been met squarely by the Tamil people and the Tamil Liberation Organization. So our leader never bothers much about this type of cynical reporting about the leader being conspicuously absent in places where he's needed. He is there.

Tamilchelvan sat expressionless during this outpouring, which went on for nearly five minutes. When I mentioned that most Americans think of the Tigers, if at all, as suicide bombers, George told me that Tamilchelvan said that this was "quite understandable," since Americans "are not in a position to discern the truth of any equation, since they are not familiar with the political situation." He urged me to consider that the government had deployed military personnel to attend to survivors of the tsunami in Tamil areas. "It is the very same military that was instrumental in hundreds of thousands of people being massacred overnight and end up in mass graves," he said, in a fit of impassioned exaggeration, and he warned, "If the administrators in Colombo do not think of removing that mind-set—the majoritarian, the supremacist, the military mind-set—then the paradigm is of course very gloomy." It was up to Colombo, he added, "to make a decision whether the Tamil people are again going to be asked to fight for their rights, or whether there is going to be accommodatingness in the center for devolving and sharing power."

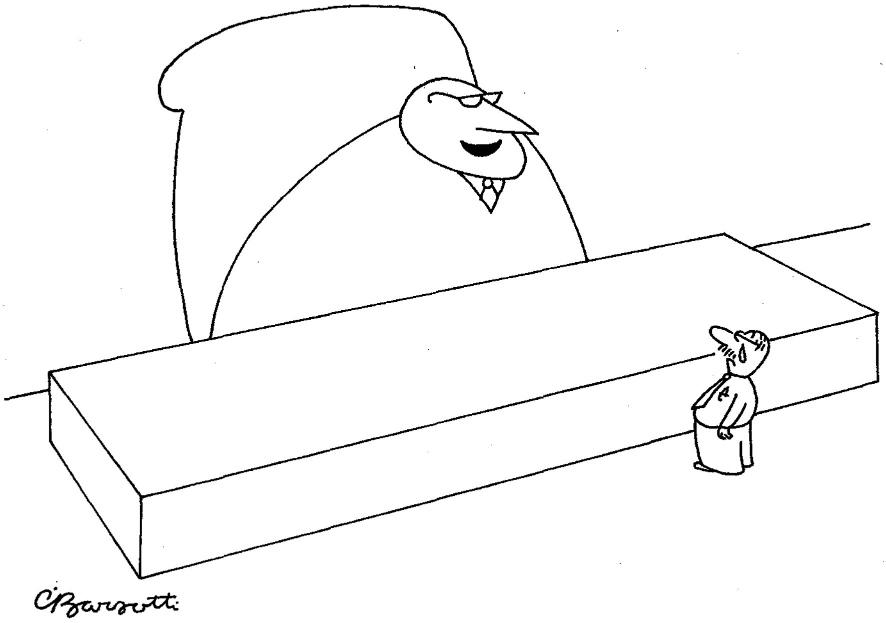
On the way out of the conference room, Tamilchelvan's press officer wrote a letter for me in Tamil—a laissez passer—that gave me permission to visit Mullaittivu, Prabhakaran's seaside stronghold. I drove there the next day. Standing at the epicenter of the devastation, I could see from the surrounding grid of streets where block upon block of houses had stood, but what remained was just crumbled chunks of concrete, with here and there an isolated vestige of human design: a staircase lifting to nowhere, an iron gate opening to nothing, a bicycle twisted like a paper clip tossed aside by nervous hands, and a grand church signified by an ornate façade. The silence of the place was broken only by the relentless cawing of crows.

A minivan pulled up to the wreckage of the church, and a party of clergymen in flowing white vestments emerged to inspect the damage. One of them, distinguished by a crimson sash as a bishop, stopped to chat with me. At the same moment, a barefoot, severely bow-legged man appeared, heading toward me. He wore an indigo sarong and a light cotton shirt, and his eyes were bright with madness. He did not stop until he was almost standing on my toes. He offered his hand, which was eerily limp and weightless, and began to speak. The sharp, sweet smell of palm toddy filled the narrow space between us. His voice was high and a little hoarse, and he went on at length, staring into my face. "He is disturbed," the bishop explained. "He lost everything." The man continued his address, but he sounded different. The bishop chuckled. "He is talking no language," he said. "It's just made-up sounds." The madman smiled at me. I smiled back. Suddenly he reached up and felt my hair, then drew his hand back in a salute and, without another sound, wandered off into the ruins.

"People have a real psychosis now," the bishop said. But who knew what that man's story was? Perhaps his mind had been swamped by the tsunami, or perhaps he had always been mad, Mullaittivu's village idiot. Still, meeting him there made George's renditions of Tamilchelvan's soliloquies seem less strange. Recalling Black July, the Tiger spokesman had said, "Just because we were Tamils, we were assaulted, killed, and made to feel humiliated. To call ourselves Tamils was a matter that we were ashamed of—we were made to feel so small. That made the youths of that day, in the year 1983, to decide that the pursuit of learning, education, for purposes of prospering in our personal lives has no meaning as long as our brethren get killed in this manner, at the hands of a cruel military." He seemed to be saying that the Tigers had chosen to fight because they felt they had no alternative. They had agreed to the cease-fire for the same reason that the government had, because neither side could win the war. As I drove through the barricades and out of Tiger territory, it was almost impossible to imagine how Sri Lanka might be put back together again.

On my last day in Sri Lanka, I had lunch in Colombo with Dayan Jayatilleka, a Sinhalese political scientist and newspaper columnist. At one point, as he was telling me about himself, he smiled a little and said, "Oh, by the way, one thing I did over the last twenty years, I was indicted as a terrorist, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, during the Emergency." This was in 1983, when Jayatilleka was twenty-five. The year before, he had been a doctoral student studying revolutionary political theory at SUNY-Binghamton, but Black July inspired him to turn his learning into action. "I not only had friends who died—close Tamil friends who were killed in the Welikade jail—I saw people killed on the street, and as a Sinhala I had a crisis of conscience," he said.

Jayatilleka and his comrades got armed and trained "in a very amateurish way" and set out to become urban guerrillas. "The idea was that the non-Tiger groups among the Tamils and the non-J.V.P. groups among the Sinhalese could link up and prevent this terrible polarization of fundamentalism on both sides," he said. "It was very utopian, and it didn't work. Some of us died, some of us went underground—like me, I was three years underground—some of us did time. We were caught between the state and these fanatical movements, and we got crushed." In 1986, when Jayatilleka was on the run from his terrorism indictment, he heard that Tigers were burning other Tamil militants in the streets of Jaffna, and that a Sinhalese student leader had been caught and murdered by J.V.P. thugs. "They cut his throat slowly. Apparently, they kept asking him where I was," Jayatilleka said. The shock of such killings sapped his appetite for armed struggle. "When we started out, none of us ever thought we'd ever be killed by other liberation fighters," he told me. "We thought we'd be killed by state forces, or tortured. We were all psyched up for



"So, you have a family. They'll be a comfort."

"On the other hand, the price of a barrel of beer is holding steady."

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that—that was the way the script was supposed to go. And then we were blindsided by the J.V.P. and the Tigers."

In 1988, Jayatilleka negotiated an amnesty, and joined the government as a minister for Batticaloa province. He resigned after six months. "We were doing atrocious things at the time to anyone suspected of Tiger associations," he said. He described entering the provincial office one day and finding a teen-age boy, lying bound and beaten, face down on the floor. "I asked what he was doing there. They said, Oh, they were going to take him out to the swamp and shoot him in the back of the head. They didn't have a case against him of any kind. I managed to get him released—but how many more like him were there?"

That year, Jayatilleka's close friend and political comrade Vijaya Kumaratunga—a charismatic movie star, who had entered politics to promote a multi-ethnic, federalist policy for Sri Lanka—was shot in the face and killed in his driveway. Although no one was ever tried for the crime, the J.V.P. is widely assumed to have been responsible, which made it all the more shocking to many Sri Lankans when Vijaya's widow, now President Kumaratunga, allied with the party. Three days before Kumaratunga was elected, in December, 1999, she survived a Tiger suicide attack, which killed twenty-two others, wounded more than a hundred, and mutilated one of her eyes, but Jayatilleka, who despises the Tigers' barbarism, does not believe that personal animus to one extremist enemy can justify an alliance with another. "There is something that has been wrong for quite some time with the political system here," he said, and added, "It's a zero-sum game. Everybody here will ally with anyone else."

Sri Lanka's problem, as Jayatilleka sees it, is the absence of an overarching sense of national identity. Nobody in public life really talks about being Sri Lankan; there are only Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims. By way of contrast, he cited India, a state held together by a political understanding of itself as secularist and federalist. "Unlike Nehru, who had an idea of India, we went the other way," Jayatilleka said. "Our nationalism wasn't national in the sense of pan-Sri Lankan. Our nationalism took a cultural form—cultural, ethnic, religious." And, he said, "Anybody who looked like a true nationalist unifier got shot."

When I left Jayatilleka, I had an appointment to visit the Minister of Hindu Religious Affairs, Douglas Devananda, at his home office, a fortified compound on a quiet residential byway in central Colombo. The entry to the street was guarded by soldiers, who tugged aside a metal barricade to let me pass through an elaborate roadblock. Devananda, who spent many years as a Tamil guerrilla before he renounced violence and entered parliament, is the only former Tamil fighter in the government, and he has survived more assassination attempts than Rasputin endured. His home was hidden behind high walls posted with watchtowers and an iron gate piled high with sandbags and blockaded by oil drums filled with concrete. As I approached on foot, a narrow shutter slid open in the gate, and two eyes and a nose appeared in the window. "American?" a voice asked, and I was admitted.

Jayatilleka, who had received arms training from Devananda in the early eighties, had told me that I would find the minister surrounded by "heavy iron," and, sure enough, a half dozen fidgety young men wearing submachine guns were huddled in the entryway. One led me through a labyrinth of short hallways that switched this way and that at ninety-degree angles. There were more men with guns at every corner. Outside, rain was threatening, and the air in Devananda's den was heavy with dampness. As we progressed, the smell of mildew grew stronger, and mold stains claimed ever larger patches of wall. We passed a screened-off antechamber filled with parakeets, an atrium with a blue-tiled carp pond, and a dim room filled with tropical vegetation, where a chattering monkey sat on a rock clutching a gnawed orange. Finally, we reached a door studded with deadbolts, which clicked open by remote control from within, and there, at the back of a long, wide, windowless room, cluttered with furniture and stacked with papers, Devananda sat behind a desk: a big, bearded man, in a loose white V-necked undershirt and a green floor-length sarong, clutching two telephones to his head, one at each ear, while talking to a man standing next to him in a booming voice.

We sat on a rattan living-room set, where an aide brought us orange soda. Jayatilleka had said of Devananda, "When I needed a submachine, he gave me one," and, when I reminded Devananda of this, he let out a true belly laugh: "Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha—those days!" He had gone for his own training as a fighter—in 1978, and again in 1984—to

Lebanon. "P.L.O., Al Fatah, George Habash," he said. Devananda had been a prisoner in the Tamil wards at the Welikade prison in 1983, when Sinhalese inmates began massacring his comrades with iron bars and blades and bludgeons. He survived by fighting off the attackers, hand to hand. Four years later, following his amnesty, when Devananda had become a government officer, he was asked by Tiger prisoners who were staging a hunger strike to come and talk to them. When he entered their cell, he was surrounded and attacked. A metal spike was driven into the back of his skull. A Sinhalese surgeon saved his life, but he describes himself as only eighty-five per cent recovered. At one point during my visit, an aide brought him a vial with a medicine dropper, which he used to lubricate his eyes. "This is unnatural tears," he explained. "If I want to cry, I put this, then I can cry. Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

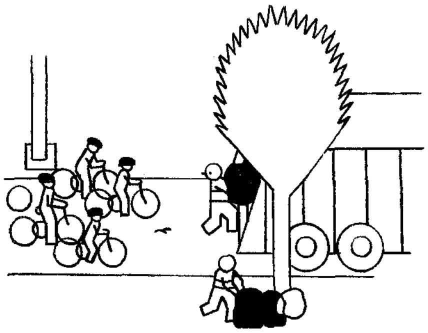
He laughed again when he told me how last summer, on a day when he opened his office to his constituents, a young Tamil woman had refused to let his guards search her above the waist. Devananda told them not to seize her, in case she was wired as a bomb. Instead, he had his men lead her to a police station, where she blew herself up, killing four officers. It was the first suicide bombing in Sri Lanka since the ceasefire, but Devananda wasn't surprised. As a former guerrilla, he said, he knew Prabhakaran's mind. "It takes a snake to know a snake," he told me. He wriggled his hand through the air. "Prabhakaran doesn't want peace, he wants P-I-E-C-E—a piece of land to rule as a dictator," he said, and added, "I tell Tamils in my community that earlier, when we fought for liberation, we were in an iron handcuff. If tomorrow the Tigers lead, it's a golden handcuff. The difference is iron or gold, but the handcuff is the same."

Devananda claims that eighty per cent of Tamils want a federal solution but that most are too terrorized by the Tigers to say so. In last year's parliamentary elections, the Tigers bullied every Tamil candidate in the areas where they have influence to swear allegiance to Prabhakaran's policies, and even then they resorted to fraud to insure victory for their candidates. Devananda read aloud from a report by European Union monitors, which said, "If the election results in the north and east had been a critical factor in determining who formed the government, it would have raised questions about the legitimacy of the final outcome. The events that took place in this part of Sri Lanka during the course of this election are totally unacceptable and are the antithesis of democracy."

Still, Devananda refused to call himself anti-Tiger. After all, he said, "If, tomorrow, Velupillai Prabhakaran genuinely comes for talks, I may give up politics." But, in the next breath, he added, "The reality is he won't come, and I also won't give up." Thinking as a snake who knows his kind, Devananda predicted that Sri Lanka would see a steady escalation of violence through the first half of this year, and so far he has not been wrong.

The killings began again in February, when a spate of tit-for-tat assassinations involving Tigers and Karuna's faction in the east broke the post-tsunami lull. The Tigers organized angry street protests, accusing the government of colluding with Karuna's cadres, and of failing to negotiate a mechanism for distributing aid to tsunami victims in Tiger areas. Throughout the spring, whenever President Kumaratunga declared herself ready to negotiate such an accord, the J.V.P. denounced her as a traitor; and when at last she succumbed to international pressure and agreed, in June, to an aid partnership with the Tigers, the J.V.P. quit the ruling coalition and persuaded the Supreme Court to suspend the pact, pending a review of its constitutionality. Meanwhile, in the north and the east, the killings have continued at a steadily intensifying rate—with a Tiger officer here, a couple of Karuna cadres there, and civilians inevitably picked off in the crossfire. Rather than bringing peace with unwanted force, the tsunami has become a new casus belli.

On the evening of April 28th, a prominent Tamil journalist named Dharmeratnam Sivaram—a founding editor of TamilNet, a widely read news Web site that is largely sympathetic to the Tigers—was accosted by four men outside a Colombo police station, bundled into a jeep, and driven away. The next day, policemen, responding to an anonymous tip, found his body in a high-security area behind the Sri Lankan parliament. Sivaram, who also wrote for the mainstream English-language newspaper, the *Daily Mirror*, had received death threats four years ago, after state media denounced him as a Tiger spy, and again last year, after he wrote about alleged ties between the government and Karuna. In May, 2004, his house had been ransacked by forty policemen, who claimed to be looking for arms. Sivaram's last column had been critical of Karuna's faction, and the stench of government collusion that clung to the circumstances of his murder further inflamed Tamils in Tiger areas. There has barely been a day since without violence.



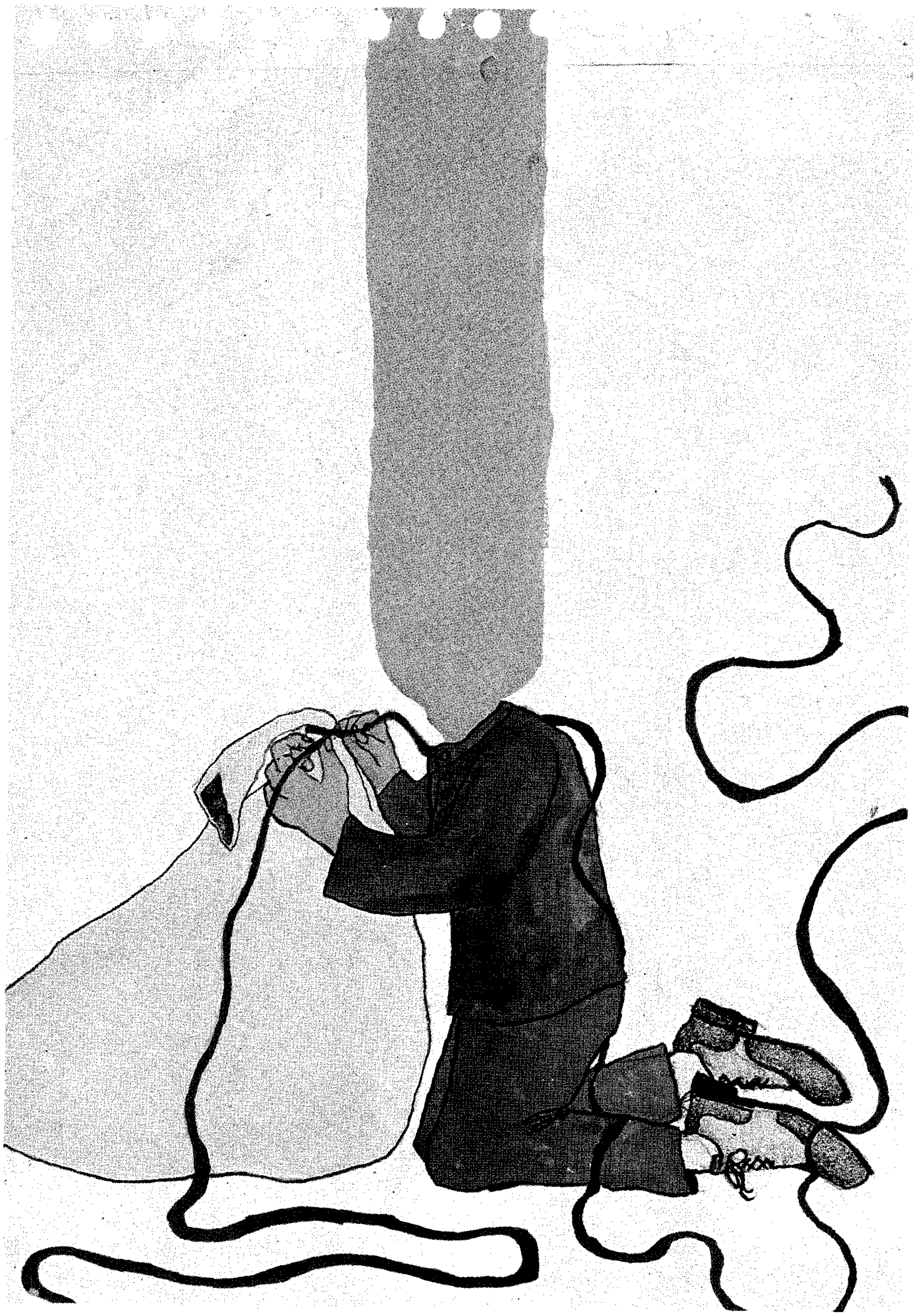
"The fascist enemy cannot be fought by imitating him. He can be fought only by maintaining a moral and ethical superiority, as exemplified in an open, pluralistic society," Dayan Jayatilleka wrote in his column, when he heard of Sivaram's death. He counted the journalist as a friend, and his column concluded with an homage: "Sivaram challenged us with his writing. He was an uppity Tamil: confident, aware of Sinhala society and political trends, knowledgeable of international affairs. He held up a mirror before us. He was the Other in our midst. Now that he is dead, this is a lonelier place."

In his next column, Jayatilleka lashed out at the "cowardice" of Sinhalese commentators, who derided Sivaram's ideas after he was dead, but never "took him on in print when he was alive"—or did so only "in the safety of a language he couldn't respond in because he did not know it." Rather than blaming the dead journalist for failing to denounce the crimes of his side, Jayatilleka said, the Sinhalese should ask themselves what offenses they have chosen to ignore. He posed as "the final question" of his friend's life a conundrum that belongs equally to every side in every ethnic-nationalist conflict on earth: "Had we been Tamil, are we sure we would not have been Sivarams?" ♦

FICTION

COMMCOMM

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS



Tuesday morning, Jillian from Disasters calls. Apparently an airman named Loolerton has poisoned a shitload of beavers. I say we don't kill beavers, we harvest them, because otherwise they nibble through our Pollution Control Devices (P.C.D.s) and polluted water flows out of our Retention Area and into the Eisenhower Memorial Wetland, killing beavers.

"That makes sense," Jillian says, and hangs up.

The press has a field day. "AIR FORCE KILLS BEAVERS TO SAVE BEAVERS," says one headline. "MURDERED BEAVERS SPEAK OF AIR FORCE CRUELTY," says another.

"We may want to PIDS this," Mr. Rimney says.

I check the files: There's a circa-1984 tortoise-related PIDS from a base in Oklahoma. There's a wild-horse-related PIDS from North Dakota. Also useful is a Clinton-era PIDS concerning the inadvertent destruction of a dove breeding ground.

From these I glean an approach: I *admit* we harvested the beavers. I *concede* the innocence and creativity of beavers. I *explain* the harvesting as a regrettable part of an ongoing effort to prevent Pollution Events from impacting the Ottowattamie. Finally I *pledge* we'll find a way to preserve our P.C.D.s without, in the future, harming beavers. We are, I say, considering transplanting the beaver population to an innovative Beaver Habitat, to be installed upstream of the Retention Area.

I put it into PowerPoint. Rimney comes back from break and reads it.

"Innovative Beaver Habitat?" he says.

"I say we're considering," I say.

"All hail to the king of PIDS," he says.

I call Ed at the paper; Jason, Heather, and Randall at NewsTen, ActionSeven, and NewsTeamTwo, respectively; then Larry from Facilities. I have him reserve the Farragut Auditorium for Wednesday night, and just like that I've got a fully executable PIDS and can go joyfully home to my wife and our crazy energized loving kids.

Just kidding.

I wish.

SCOTT ACOSTA, "EPISODIC" (2004)/DANIEL REICH GALLERY

I walk between Mom and Dad into the kitchen, make those frozen ministeaks called SmallCows. You microwave them or pull out their ThermoTab. When you pull the ThermoTab, something chemical happens and the SmallCows heat up. I microwave. Unfortunately, the ThermoTab erupts and when I take the SmallCows out they're coated with a green, fibrous liquid. So I make ramen.

"You don't hate the Latvians, do you?" Dad says to me.

"It was not all Latvians done it," Mom says.

I turn on Tape 9, "Omission/Partial Omission." When sadness-inducing events occur, the guy says, invoke your Designated Substitute Thoughtstream. Your D.S.T. might be a man falling off a cliff but being caught by a group of good friends. It might be a bowl of steaming soup, if one likes soup. It might be something as distractive/mechanical as walking along a row of cans, kicking them down.

"And don't even hate them two," Mom says. "They was just babies."

"They did not do that because they was Latvian," says Dad. "They did it because of they had poverty and anger."

"What the hell," says Mom. "Everything turned out good."

My D.S.T. is tapping a thin rock wall with a hammer. When that wall cracks, there's another underneath. When that wall cracks, there's another underneath.

"You hungry?" Mom says to Dad.

"Never hungry anymore," he says.

"Me too," she says. "Plus I never pee."

"Something's off but I don't know what," Dad says.

When that wall cracks, there's another underneath.

"Almost time," Mom says to me, her voice suddenly nervous. "Go upstairs."

I go to my room, watch some World Series, practice my PIDS in front of the mirror.

What's going on down there I don't watch anymore: Mom's on the landing in her pajamas, calling Dad's name, a little testy. Then she takes a bullet in the neck, her hands fly up, she rolls the rest of the way down, my poor round Ma. Dad comes up from the basement in his gimpy comic trot, concerned, takes a bullet in the chest, drops to his knees, takes one in the head, and that's that.

Then they do it again, over and over, all night long.

Finally it's morning. I go down, have a bagel.

Our house has this turret you can't get into from inside. You have to go outside and use a ladder. There's nothing up there but bird droppings and a Nixon-era plastic Santa with a peace sign scratched into his toy bag. That's where they go during the day. I climbed up there once, then never again: jaws hanging open, blank stares, the two of them sitting against the wall, insulation in their hair, holding hands.

"Have a good one," I shout at the turret as I leave for work.

Which I know is dumb, but still.

When I get to work, Elliot Giff from Safety's standing in the Outer Hall. Giff's a GS-9 with pink glasses and an immense underchin that makes up a good third of the length of his face.

"Got this smell-related call?" he says.

We step in. There's definitely a smell. Like a mildew/dirt/decomposition thing.

"We have a ventilation problem," Rimney says stiffly.

"No lie," Giff says. "Smells like something crawled inside the wall and died. That happened to my aunt."

"Your aunt crawled inside a wall and died," Rimney says.

"No, a rat," says Giff. "Finally she had to hire a Puerto Rican fellow to drill a hole in her wall. Maybe you should do that."

"Hire a Puerto Rican fellow to drill a hole in your aunt's wall," Rimney says.

"I like how you're funny," Giff says. "There's joy in that."

Giff's in the ChristLife Reënactors. During the reënactments, they eat only dates and drink only grape juice out of period-authentic flasks. He says that this weekend's reënactment was on the hill determined to be the most topographically similar to Calvary in the entire Northeast. I ask who he did. He says the guy who lent Christ his mule on Palm Sunday. Rimney says it's just like Giff to let an unemployed Jew borrow his ass.

"You're certainly not hurting me with that kind of talk," Giff says.

"I suppose I'm hurting Christ," says Rimney.

"Not hardly," says Giff.

On Rimney's desk is a photo of Mrs. Rimney before the stroke: braless in a tank top, hair to her waist, holding a walking stick. In the photo, Rimney's wearing a bandanna, pretending to toke something. Since the stroke, he works his nine or ten, gets groceries, goes home, cooks, bathes Val, does the dishes, goes to bed.

My feeling is, no wonder he's mean.

Giff starts to leave, then doubles back.

"You and your wife are in the prayers of me and our church," he says to Rimney. "Despite of what you may think of me."

"You're in my prayers, too," says Rimney. "I'm always praying you stop being so sanctimonious and miraculously get less full of shit."

Giff leaves, not doubling back this time.

Rimney hasn't liked Giff since the day he suggested that Rimney could cure Mrs. Rimney if only he'd elevate his prayerfulness.

"All right," Rimney says. "Who called him?"

Mrs. Gregg bursts into tears and runs to the ladies'.

"I don't get why all the drama," says Rimney.

"Hello, the base is closing in six months," says Jonkins.

"Older individuals like Mrs. G. are less amenable to quick abrupt changes," says Verblin.

When Closure was announced, I found Mrs. G. crying in the Outer Hall. What about Little Bill? she said. Little Bill had just bought a house. What about Amber, pregnant with twins, and her husband, Goose, drunk every night at the Twit? What about Nancy and Vendra? What about Jonkins and Al? There's not a job to be had in town, she said. Where are all these sweet people supposed to go?

I've sent out more than thirty résumés, been store to store, chatted up Dad's old friends. Even our grocery's half-closed. What used to be Produce is walled off with plywood. On the plywood is a sign: "If We Don't Have It, Sorry."

CommComm's been offered a group transfer to NAIVAC Omaha. But Mom and Dad aren't allowed into the yard, much less to Omaha. And when I'm not around they get agitated. I went to Albany last March for a seminar and they basically trashed the place. Which couldn't have been easy. To even disturb a drape for them is a big deal. I walked in and Mom was trying to tip over the coffee table by flying through it on her knees and Dad was inside the couch, trying to weaken the springs via repetitive fast spinning. They didn't mean to but were compelled. Even as they were flying/spinning they were apologizing profusely.

"Plus it really does stink in here," Little Bill says.

"Who all is getting a headache, raise your hand," says Jonkins.

"Oh, all right," Rimney says, then goes into my cubicle and calls Odors. He asks why they can't get over immediately. How many odors do they have exactly? Has the entire base suddenly gone smelly?

I walk in and he's not talking into the phone, just tapping it against his leg.

He winks at me and asks loudly how Odors would like to try coördinating Community Communications while developing a splitting headache in a room that smells like ass.

All afternoon it stinks. At five, Rimney says let's hope for the best overnight and wear scuba gear in tomorrow, except for Jonkins, who, as far as Jonkins, they probably don't make scuba gear that humongous.

"I cannot believe you just said that," says Jonkins.

"Learn to take a joke," Rimney says, and slams into his office.

I walk out with Jonkins and Mrs. Gregg. The big flag over the Dirksen excavation is snapping in the wind, bright-yellow leaves zipping past as if weighted.

"I hate him," says Jonkins.

"I feel so bad for his wife," says Mrs. Gregg.

"First you have to live with him, then you have a stroke?" says Jonkins.

"And then you still have to live with him?" says Mrs. Gregg.

The Dirksen Center for Terror is the town's great hope. If transferred to the Dirksen, you keep your benefits and years accrued and your salary goes up, because you're Homeland Security instead of Air Force. We've all submitted our Requests for Transfer and our Self-Assessment Worksheets and now we're just waiting to hear.

Except Rimney. Rimney heard right away. Rimney knows somebody who knows somebody. He was immediately certified Highly Proficient and is Dirksen-bound, which, possibly, is another reason everybody hates him.

My feeling is, good for him. If he went to Omaha, imagine the work. He and Val have a routine here, contacts, a special van, a custom mechanical bed. Imagine having to pick up and start over somewhere else.

"Home, home, home," says Mrs. Gregg.

"PIDS, PIDS, PIDS," I say.

"Oh, you poor thing," says Mrs. Gregg.

"If I had to stand up in front of all those people," says Jonkins, "I'd put a bullet in my head."

Then there's a long silence.

"Shit, man, sorry," he says to me.

The Farragut's full. I *admit*, *concede*, *explain*, and *pledge*. During the Q. & A., somebody says if the base is closing, why spend big bucks on a Beaver Habitat? I say because the Air Force is committed to insuring that, post-Closure, all Air Force sites remain environmentally viable, prioritizing both species health and a diverse life-form mix.

Afterward Rimney's back by the snacks. He says is there anything I can't PIDS? I say probably not. I've PIDSed sexual-harassment cases, a cracked hazardous-waste incinerator, half a dozen jet-fuel spills. I PIDSed it when General Lemaster admitted being gay, retracted his admission, then retracted his retraction, all in the same day, before vanishing for a week with one of his high-school daughter's girlfriends.

"You might have noticed earlier that I was not actually calling Odors," Rimney says.

"I did notice that," I say.

"Thing I like about you, you're a guy who understands life gets complicated," he says. "Got a minute? I need to show you something."

I follow him back to CommComm. Which still stinks. I follow him into the copier closet, which stinks even worse.

In the closet is something big, in bubble wrap.

"Note to self," he says. "Bubble wrap? Not smell-preventing."

He slits open the bubble wrap. Inside is this giant dirt clod. Sticking out of the clod is a shoe. In the shoe is a foot, a rotted foot, in a rotted sock.

"I don't get it," I say.

"Found down in the Dirksen excavation," he says. "Thought I could stash them in here a few days, but phew. Can you believe it?"

He slits open a second bubble-wrap package. There's another guy, not enclodded, cringed up, in shredded pants, looking like he's been dipped in mustard. This one's small, like a jockey.

"They look old-timey to me," Rimney says.

They do look old-timey. Their shoes are big crude shoes with big crude nails.

"So you see our issue," he says. "Dirksen-wise."

I don't. But then I do.

The Racquetball Facility was scrapped due to someone found an Oneida nose-ring portion on the site. Likewise the proposed Motor Pool Improvement, on account of a shard of Colonial crockery.

If a pottery shard or partial nose ring can scrap a project, think what a couple of Potentially Historical corpses/mummies will do.

"Who else knows?" I say.

"The contractor," Rimney says. "Rick Granis. You know Rick?"

I've known Rick since kindergarten. I remember how mad he'd get if anyone called his blanket anything but his binkie. Now he's got an Escalade and a summer house on Otissic Lake.

"But Rick's cool with it," he says. "He'll do whatever."

He shows me Rick's Daily Historical-Resource Assessment Worksheet. Under "Non-Historical Detritus," Rick's written, "Two contemp soda bottles, one contemp flange." Under "Evidence of Pre-Existing Historical/Cultural Presence," he's written, "Not that I know of."

Rimney says that a guy like me, master of the public-presentation aspect, could be a great fit at the Dirksen. As I may know, he knows somebody who knows somebody. Do I find the idea of Terror work at all compelling?

I say sure, yes, of course.

He says, thing is, they're just bodies. The earth is full of bodies. Under every building in the world, if you dig deep enough, is probably a body. From the looks of it, someone just dumped these poor guys into a mass grave. They're not dressed up, no coffins, no dusty flower remains, no prayer cards.

I say I'm not sure I totally follow.

IS EVERYTHING O.K.?
WAITRESS'S DAY OFF

He says he's thinking a respectful reburial, somewhere they won't be found, that won't fuck up the Dirksen.

"And tell the truth," he says, "I could use some help."

I think of Tape 4, "Living the Now." What is the Now Situation? How can I pull the pearl from the burning oyster? How can the "drowning boy" be saved? I do an Actual Harm Analysis. Who would a reburial hurt? The mummy guys? They're past hurt. Who would it help? Rimney, Val Rimney, all future Dirksen employees.

Me.

Mom, Dad.

Dad worked thirty years at Gallup Chain, with his dad. Then they discontinued Automotive. Only Bike remained. A week after his layoff, Grandpa died. Day of the wake, Dad got laid off too. Month later, we found out Jean was sick. Jean was my sister, who died at eight. Her last wish was Disneyland. But money was tight. Toward the end, Dad borrowed money from Leo, the brother he hated. But Jean was too sick to travel. So Dad had an Army friend from Barstow film all of Disney on a Super-8. The guy walked the whole place. Jean watched it and watched it. Dad was one of these auto-optimists. To hear him tell it, we'd won an incredible last-minute victory. Hadn't we? Wasn't it something, that we could give Jeanie such a wonderful opportunity?

But Jean had been distilled down to like pure honesty.

"I do wish I could have gone, though," she said.

"Well, we practically did," Dad said, looking panicked.

"No, but I wish we really did," she said.

After Jean died, we kept her room intact, did a birthday thing for her every year, started constantly expecting the worst. I'd come home from a high-school party and Mom would be sitting there with her rosary, mumbling, praying for my safe return. Even a dropped shopping bag, a broken jar of Prego, would send them into a funk, like: Doom, doom, of course, isn't this the way it always goes for us?

Eight years later came the night of the Latvians.

So a little decent luck for Mom and

Dad doesn't seem like too much to ask.

"About this job thing," I say.

"I will absolutely make it happen," he says.

The way we do it is we carry them one at a time out to his special van. He's got a lift in there for Val. Not that we need the lift. These guys are super-light. Then we drive out to the forest behind Missions. We dig a hole, which is not easy, due to roots. I go in, he hands them down very gentle. They're so stiff and dry it's hard to believe they can still smell.

We backfill, kick some leaves around, drag over a small fallen tree.

"You O.K.?" he says. "You look a little freaked."

I ask should we maybe say a prayer.

"Go ahead," he says. "My feeling is, these guys have been gone so long they're either with Him or not. If there even is a Him. Might be real, might not. To me? What's real? Val. When I get home tonight, there she'll be, waiting. Hasn't eaten yet, needs her bath. Been by herself the whole day. That, to me? Is real."

I say a prayer, lift my head when done.

"I thank you, Val thanks you," he says.

In the van, I do a Bad Feelings Acknowledgment re the reburial. I visualize my Useless Guilt as a pack of black dogs. I open the gate, throw out the Acknowledgment Meat. Pursuing the Meat, the black dogs disappear over a cliff, turning into crows (i.e., Neutral/Non-Guilty Energy), which then fly away, feeling Assuaged.

Back at CommComm, we wash off the shovels, Pine-Sol the copier closet, throw open the windows, check e-mail while the place airs out.

Next morning, the stink is gone. The office just smells massively like Pine-Sol. Giff comes in around eleven, big bandage on his humongous underchin.

"Hey, smells super in here today," he says. "Praise the Lord for that, right? And all things."

"What happened to your chin?" says Rimney. "Zonk it on a pew while speaking in tongues?"

"We don't speak in tongues," says Giff. "I was just shaving."

"Interesting," Rimney says. "Goodbye."

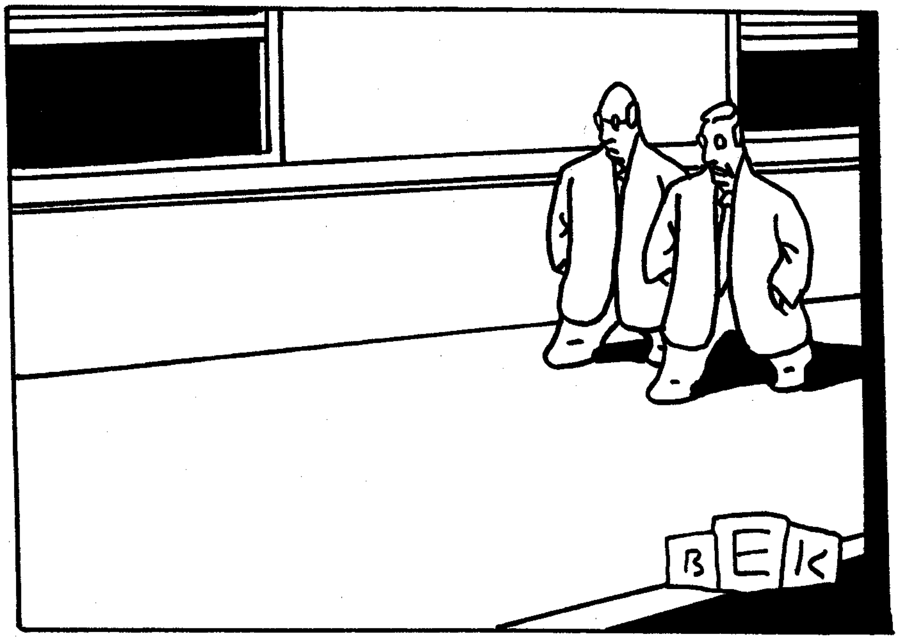
"Not goodbye," says Giff. "I have to do my Situational Follow-Up. What in your view is the reason for the discontinued nature of that crappo smell you all previously had?"

"A miracle," says Rimney. "Christ came down with some Pine-Sol."

"I don't really go for that kind of talk," says Giff.

"Why not pray I stop?" says Rimney. "See if it works."

"Let me tell you a like parable," Giff says. "This one girl in our church? Had this like perma-smile? Due to something? And her husband, who was non-church, was always having to explain that she wasn't really super-happy, it was just her malady. It was like the happier she looked, the madder he got. Then he came to our church, guess what happened?"



"If it made sense, that would be a very powerful idea."

"She was miraculously cured and he was miraculously suddenly not angry," says Rimney. "God reached down and fixed them both, while all over the world people who didn't come to your church remained in misery, weeping."

"Well, no," says Giff.

"And that's not technically a parable," says Verblin.

"See, but you're what happens when man stays merely on his own plane," says Giff. "Man is made bitter. Look, I'm not claiming I'm not human and don't struggle. Heck, I'm as human as you. Only I struggle, when I struggle, with the help of Him that knows no struggle. Which is why sometimes I maybe seem so composed or, you might say, together. Everyone in our church has that same calm. It's not just me. It's just Him, is how we say it."

"How calm would you stay if I broke your neck?" says Rimney.

"Ron, honestly," Jonkins says.

"Quiet, Tim," Rimney says to Jonkins. "If we listen closely, we may hear the call of the North American extremist loony."

"Maybe you're the extremist due to you think you somehow created your own self," says Giff.

"Enough, this is a place of business," says Rimney.

Then Milton Gelton comes in. Gelton's a GS-5 in Manual Site Aesthetics Improvement. He roams the base picking up trash with a sharp stick. When he finds a dead animal, he calls Animals. When he finds a car battery, he calls Environmental.

"Want to see something freaky?" he says, holding out his bucket. "Found behind Missions?"

In the bucket is a yellow-black human hand.

"Is that a real actual hand of someone?" says Amber.

"At first I thought glove," Gelton says. "But no. See? No hand-hole. Just solid."

He pokes the hand with a pen to

demonstrate the absence of a hand-hole.

"You know what else I'm noting as weird?" Giff says. "In terms of that former smell? I can all of a sudden smell it again."

He sniffs his way down to the bucket.

"Yoinks, similar," he says.

"I doubt this is a Safety issue," says Rimney.

"I disagree," says Giff. "This hand seems like it might be the key to our Possible Source of your Negative Odor. Milton, can you show me the exact locale where you found this at?"

Out they go. Rimney calls me in. How the hell did we drop that fucker? Jesus, what else did we drop? This is not funny, he says, do I realize we could go to jail for this? We knowingly altered a Probable Historical Site. At the very least, we'll catch hell in the press. As for the Dirksen, this gets out, goodbye Dirksen.

I eat lunch in the Eating Area. Little Bill's telling about his trip to Omaha. He stayed at a MinTel. The rooms are closet-size. They like slide you in. You're allowed two slide-outs a night. After that it's three dollars a slide-out.

Rimney comes out, says he's got to run home. Val's having leg cramps. When she has leg cramps, the only thing that works is hot washrags. He's got a special pasta pot and two sets of washrags, one blue, one white. One set goes on her legs, while the other set heats.

With Rimney gone, discipline erodes. Out the window I see Verblin sort of mincing to his car. A yardstick slides out of his pants. When he stoops to get the yardstick, a print cartridge drops out of his coat. When he bends to pick up the cartridge, his hat falls off, revealing a box of staples.

At three, Ms. Durrell from Environmental calls. Do we have any more of those dioxin coloring books? Do I know what she means? It's not a new spill, just reawakened concern over an old spill. I know what she means. She means "Donnie Dioxin: Badly Misunderstood But Actually Quite Useful Under Correct Usage Conditions."

I'm in Storage looking for the books when my cell rings.

"Glad I caught you," Rimney says stiffly. "Can you come out to Missions? I swung by on the way back and, boy, oh boy, did Elliot ever find something amazing."

"Is he standing right there?" I say.

"O.K., see you soon," he says, and hangs up.

I park by the Sputnik-era jet-on-a-pedestal. The fake pilot's head is facing backward and a twig's been driven up his nose. Across the fuselage some kid's painted, "This thing looks like my pennis if my pennis has wings."

It starts to flurry. Giff's been at the grave with a shovel. So far, it's just the top of the jockey's head sticking out, and part of the enclodded guy's foot.

"Wow," I say.

"Wow is correct," Rimney says.

"Thanks be to Scouts," Giff says. "See? Footprints galore. Plus tire tracks. To me? It's like a mystery or one of those deals where there's more than meeting the eyes. Because where did these fellows come from? Who put them here? Why did your office smell so bad, in an off way similar to that gross way that hand smelled? In my logic? I ask, Where locally is somewhere deep that's recently been unearthed or dug into? What I realized? The Dirksen. That is deep, that is new. What do you think? I'll get with Historical tomorrow, see what used to be where the Dirksen is at now."

I helped Rimney get Val home from the hospital after the stroke, watched the two of them burst into tears at the sight of her mechanical bed.

He looks worse than that now.

"Fuck it. I'm going to tell him, trust him. What do you think?" he says.

My feeling is no, no, no. Giff's not exactly the King of Sense of Humor. Last year, I was the only non-church person at his Christmas party. The big issue was, somebody on Giff's wife's side had sent their baby a stuffed DevilChild from Hell from the cartoon "HellHood." The DevilChild starts each episode as a kindly angel with a lisp. Then something makes him mad and he morphs into a demon and starts speaking with an Eastern European accent while running around stabbing uptight people in the butt with a red-hot prod.

"As for me and my house, this little guy has no place here," Giff had said. "Although Cyndi apparently feels otherwise."

Cyndi I would describe as pretty but flinchy.

"Andy doesn't see it as the Devil," she said. "He just likes it."

"Well, I do see it as the Devil," Giff said. "And I don't like it. And here in this house a certain book tells us the role of the father/husband. Am I right?"

"I guess so," she said.

"You guessing so, like Pastor Mike says, is sympromatic of your having an imperfect understanding of what the Lord has in mind for our family, though," he said. "Right? Right, Pastor Mike?"

"Well, it's certainly true that a family can only have one head," said a guy in a Snoopy sweater who I guessed was Pastor Mike.

"O.K., tough guy," Cyndi said to Giff, and stomped off, ringing the tree ornaments.

I can see Giff's wheels turning. Or trying to. He's not the brightest. I once watched him spend ten minutes trying to make a copy on a copier in the Outer Hall which was unplugged and ready for Disposal.

"Wait, are you saying you guys did this?" he says.

Rimney says Giff has a wife, Giff has a baby—would a transfer to the Dirksen be of interest? Maybe Giff's aware that he, Rimney, knows somebody who knows somebody?

"Oh, my gosh, you guys did do it," Giff says.

He lets the shovel fall and walks toward the woods, as if so shocked he has to seek relief in the beauty of nature. Out in the woods are three crushed toilets. Every tenth bush or so has a red tag on it, I have no idea why.

"All's I can say is wow," Giff says.

"They're dead, man," Rimney says. "What do you care?"

"Yes, but who was it shaped these fellows?" says Giff. "You? Me? Look, I'm going to speak frank. I think I see what's going on here. Both you guys took recent hard hits. One had a wife with a stroke, the other a great tragic loss of their parents. So you got confused, made a bad call. But He redeemeth, if only we open our hearts. Know how I know? It happened to me. I also took a hard hit this year. Because guess what? In terms of my wife? I'm just going to say it. Our baby is not my baby. Cyndi had a slipup with this friend of ours, Kyle. I found out just before Christmas, which was why I was such a fart at our party. That put me in a total funk—we were like match and gas. I was so mad there was a darkness upon me. Poor thing had bruises all up her arms, due to I started pinching her. In her sleep, or sometimes I would get so mad and just come up quick and do it. Then, January tenth, I'd had enough, and I prayed, I said, 'Lord, I am way too small, please take me up into You, I don't want to do this anymore.' And He did it. I dropped as if shot. And when I woke? My heart was changed. All glory goes to Him. I mean, it was a literal release in my chest. All my hate about the baby was gone and all of a sudden Andy was just my son for real."

"Nice story," says Rimney.

"It's not a story. It happened to me for real in my life," says Giff. "Point is? I had it in me to grow. We all do! I'm not all good, but there's a good part of me. My fire may be tiny, but it's a fire just the same. See what I mean? Same like you. Do you know that good part? Have you met it, that part of you that is all about Truth, that is called, in how we would say it, your Christ-portion? My Christ-portion knew that pinching was wrong. How does your Christ-portion feel about this sneaky burial thingy? I mean honestly. In a perfect world, is that what you would have chose to do?"

This catches me a little off guard.

"Is this where I go into a seizure and you heal me by stroking my dick?" Rimney says.

Giff blinks at this, turns to me.

"Think these things up in your heart," he says softly. "Treasure them around. See what it is. Then be in touch, come to our church, if you want. I am hopeful that you will come to your Truth."

Suddenly my eyes tear up.

And I don't even know why.

"This is about my wife, jackass," says Rimney.

" 'Do what's right, come what may,' " Giff says. "That's what it says on all our softball sweatshirts, and I believe it. And on the back? 'Say no thanks to Mr. Mere Expedience.' Good words for you, friend."

Rimney's big. Once when mad he smacked the overhang on the way to Vending and there's still a handprint up there. Once he picked up one end of the photocopier so Mrs. Gregg could find her earring, and a call came in and he had this big long conversation with Benefits while still holding up the copier.

"Cross me on this, you'll regret it," he says.

"Get thee behind me," says Giff.

So, a little tense.

My phone rings. Ms. Durrell again. She's got a small vocal outraged group coming at four to eat her alive. Where the hell am I? Those dioxin books? Had something to do with a donkey, "Donkey Dioxin, Who Got the Job Done"? Or it was possibly an ape or possum or some such shit? She remembers a scene at the end with some grateful villagers, where the ape/possum/donkey/whatever gave the kids a ride, and also the thing came with a CD?

"Go," Rimney says. "Elliot and I will work this out."

By the time I get the books out of Storage and over to Environmental it's after five.

I clock out, race home through our wincing little town. Some drunks outside the Twit are heaving slushballs up at the laughing neon Twit. Blockbuster has a new program of identifying all videos as either Artsy or Regular. Two beautiful girls in heels struggle down to the banks of the Ottowattamie, holding each other up. Why are they going down there? It's dusk and that part of the river's just mud and an old barge.

I wish I could ask them but I don't have time. When I'm late Mom and Dad race around shouting, "Where? Where? Where?" It always ends in this bitter mutual crying. It's just one of their things. Like when it rains, they go up to the ceiling and lie there facing up. Like when feeling affectionate, they run full speed toward each other and pass through, moaning/laughing.

The night of the Latvians I was out with Cleo from Vehicles. We went parking, watched some visiting Warthogs practice their night-firing. Things heated up. She had a room on the side of a house, wobbly wooden stairs leading up. Did I call, say I'd be late, say I might not be back at all? No, I did not. Next morning I came home, found the house taped off. For the body locations, the cops didn't use chalk. There was just a piece of looseleaf on the stairs labelled "Deceased Female" and one on the kitchen floor labelled "Deceased Male."

I tell myself, If I'd been home, I'd be dead, too. The Latvians had guns. They came in quick, on crack, so whacked out they forgot to even steal anything.

Still. Mom's sciatica was acting up. She'd just had two teeth pulled. At the end, on the steps, on her back, she kept calling my name, as in, Where is he? Did they get him too? Next day, on the landing, I found the little cotton swab the dentist had left in her mouth.

So if they want me home right after work I'm home right after work.

They're standing at the kitchen window, looking out at the old ball-bearing plant. All my childhood, discarded imperfect ball bearings rolled down the hill into our yard. When the plant closed, a lathe came sliding down, like a foot a day, until it hit an oak.

"Snowing like a mother," Dad says.

"Pretty, but we can't go out," says Mom.

"Too old, I guess," Dad says sadly.

"Or something," says Mom.

I set three places. They spend the whole dinner, as usual, trying to pick up their forks. Afterward they crowd under the floor lamp, the best part of their night. When they stand in direct heat, it doesn't make them warmer, just makes them vividly remember their childhoods.

"Smell of melted caramel," Mom says.

"The way I felt first time I seen a Dodger uniform in color," says Dad.

Dad asks me to turn up the dimmer. I do, and the info starts coming too fast for grammar.

"Working with beets purple hands Mother finds that funny," says Mom.

"Noting my boner against ticking car, Mr. Klemm gives look of you-are-rubbing-your-boner, mixed sense of shame/pride, rained so hard flooded gutters, rat wound up in the dog bowl," says Dad.

They step out of the light, shake it off.

"He's always talking about boners," says Mom.

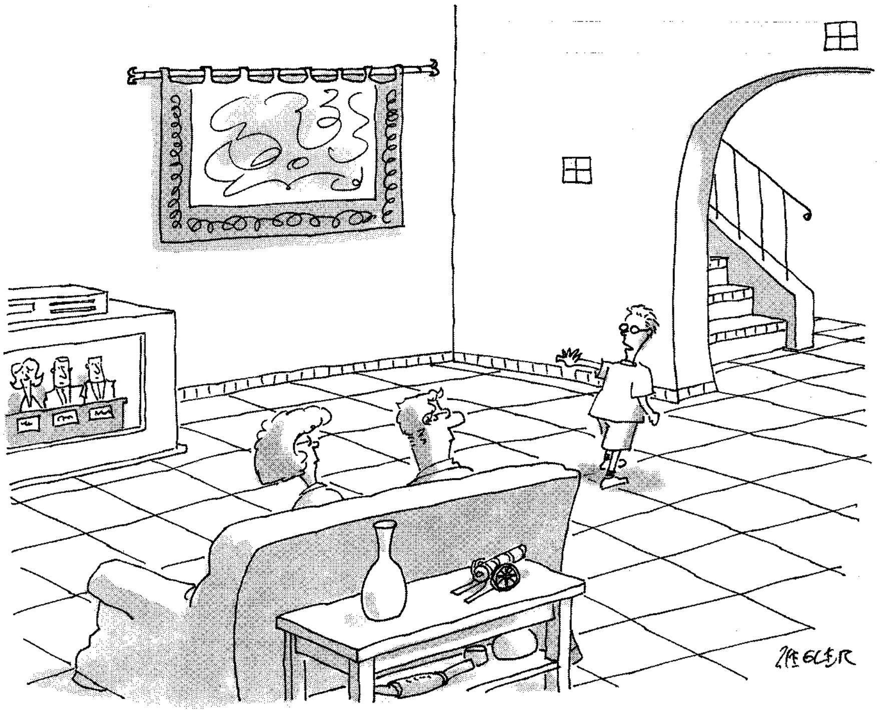
"Having a boner is a great privilege," says Dad.

"You had your share," says Mom.

"I should say so," says Dad. "And will continue to, I hope, until the day I die."

Having said "die," Dad blinks. Whenever we see a murder on TV, they cover their eyes. Whenever a car backfires, I have to coax them out from under the couch. Once a bird died on the sill and they spent the entire day in the pantry.

"Until the day you die," Mom says, as if trying to figure out what the words mean.



"I'm going back to my room, where the media is a little less mainstream."

Before they can ask any questions, I go outside and shovel.

From all over town comes the sound of snowplows, the scraping plus the beeping they do when reversing. The moon's up, full, with halo. My phone rings in my parka pocket.

"We have a situation," Rimney says. "Can you step outside?"

"I am outside," I say.

"Oh, there you are," he says.

The special van's coming slowly up the street.

"New plan," he says, still on the phone, parking now. "What's done is done. We can save the Dirksen or lose it. Minimize the damage or maximize."

He gets out, leads me around to the sliding door.

You didn't, I think. You did not dig those poor guys up again. Does he think Historical is stupid? Does he think Historical, getting a report of mummies, finding only a recently filled hole, is going to think, Oh, Giff, very funny, you crack us up?

"Not the mummies," I say.

"I wish," he says, and throws open the door.

Lying there is Giff, fingers clenched like he's trying to cling to a ledge, poor pink glasses hanging off one ear.

I take a step back, trip on the curb, sit in a drift.

"We took a walk, things got out of hand," he says. "Shit, shit, shit. I tried to reason with him, but he started giving me all his Christian crap. Something snapped, honestly. It just got away from me. You've probably had that happen?"

"You killed him?" I say.

"An unfortunate thing transpired, after which he died, yes," Rimney says.

Thrown in there with Giff is a big rock, partly wrapped in bloody paper towels.

I ask did he call the police. He says if he planned on calling the police, would he have thrown Giff in back of the freaking van? He says we've got to think pragmatic. He did it, he fucked up, he knows that. He'll be paying for it the rest of his life, but no way is Val paying for it. If he goes to jail, what happens to Val? A state home? No, no, no, he says. Dead is dead, he can't change that. Why kill Val as well?

"What do we do with this guy?" he says. "Think, think."

"We?" I say. "You."

"Oh God, oh shit," he says. "I can't believe I killed somebody. Me, I did it. Jesus, wow. O.K. O.K."

Snow's blowing in over Giff, melting on his glasses, clumping up between his pants and bare leg.

"You know Val, you like Val, right?" Rimney says.

I do like Val. I remember her at Mom and Dad's funeral, in her wheelchair. She had Rimney lift one of her hands to my arm, did this sad little pat pat pat.

"Because here's the thing," Rimney says. "Dirksen-wise? You're all set. I submitted my rec. It's in the system. Right? Why not take it? Prosper, get a little something for yourself, find a wife, make some babies. The world's shit on you enough, right? You did not do this, I did. I shouldn't have come here. How about pretend I didn't?"

I stand up, start to do a Moral Benefit Eval, then think, No, no way, do not even think about doing that stupid shit now.

The bandage on Giff's underchin flips up, showing his shaving scar.

"Because who was he?" says Rimney. "Who was he really? Was he worth a Val? Was he even a person? He, to me, was just a dumb-idea factory. That's it."

Poor Giff, I think. Poor Giff's wife, poor Giff's baby.

Poor Val.

Poor everybody.

"Don't fuck me on this," Rimney says. "Are you going to fuck me on this? You are, aren't you? Fine. Fine, then."

He turns away, slams the van door shut, emits this weird little throat-sound, like he can't live with what he's done and would like to end it all, only can't, because ending it all would make him even more of a shit.

"I feel I'm in a nightmare," he says.

Then he crashes the Giff-rock into my head. I can't believe it. Down I go. He swung so hard he's sitting down too. For a second we both sit there, like playing cards or something. I push off against his face, crawl across the yard, get inside, bolt the door.

"I don't like that," says Dad, all frantic. "I did not like seeing that."

"People should not," Mom says. "That is not a proper way."

When terrified, they do this thing where they flicker from Point A to Point B with no interim movement. Mom's in the foyer, then in the kitchen, then at the top of the stairs.

"You better get to the hospital," Dad says.

"Take this poor kid with you," Mom says.

"He just suddenly showed up," Dad says.

Somebody's on the couch. It takes me a second to recognize him.

Giff.

Or something like Giff: fish-pale, naked, bloody dent in his head, squinting, holding his glasses in one hand.

"Whoa," he says. "Is this ever not how I expected it would be like."

"What what would be like?" says Dad.

"Death and all?" he says.

Dad flickers on and off: smiling in his chair, running in place, kneeling near the magazine rack.

"You ain't dead, pal, you're just naked," says Dad.

"Naked, plus somebody blammed you in the head," says Mom.

"Do they not know?" Giff says.

I give him a look, like, Please don't. We're just enjoying a little extra time. I'm listening to their childhood stories, playing records from their courtship days, staring at them when they're not looking, telling them how good they were with me and Jean, how safe we always felt.

"Don't you love them?" Giff says.

I remember them outside the funeral home the day we buried Jean, Mom holding Dad up, Dad trying to sit on a hydrant, wearing his lapel button, his lapel photo-button of little smiling Jean.

"Then better tell them," Giff says. "Before it's too late. Because watch."

He stands, kind of shaky, hobbles over, breathes in my face.

Turns out when the recently dead breathe in your face they show you the future.

I see Mom and Dad trapped here forever, reënacting their deaths night after night, more agitated every year, finally to the point of insanity, until, in their insanity, all they can do is rip continually at each other's flesh, like angry birds, for all eternity.

I tell them.

"Very funny," says Mom.

"Cut it out," Dad says.

"We're a little sad sometimes," says Mom. "But we definitely ain't dead."

"Are we?" Dad says.

Then they get quiet.

"Holy crap," Dad says.

Suddenly they seem to be hearing something from far away.

"Jeez, that's better," Dad says.

"Feels super," Mom says.

"Like you had a terrible crick and then it went away," Dad says.

"Like your dirty dress you had on for the big party all of a sudden got clean," says Mom.

They smile, step through the wall, vanish in two little sudden blurps of light.

Giff's pale and bent, glowing/shimmering, taller than in life, a weird breeze in his hair that seems to be coming from many directions at once.

"There is a glory, but not like how I thought," he says. "I had it all wrong. Mostly wrong. Like my mind was this little basket, big flood pouring in, but all I got was this hint of greater water?"

"You were always a nice person," I say.

"No, I was not," he says. "Forced my little mini-views down everybody's throat. Pinched my wife! And now it's so sad. Because know what he did? Rimney? Typed her a note, like it was from me, saying I was leaving, due to I didn't love her, due to that Kyle thing. But that is so not true! I loved her all through that. But now, rest of her life, she's going to be thinking that of me, that I left her and the baby, when we were just getting over that pinching thing."

His eyes fill with tears and his hair stops blowing and he crushes his pink glasses in his hand.

"Go see her," I say. "Tell her the truth."

"Can't," he says. "You just get one."

"One what?" I say.

"Visitation or whatever?" he says.

I think, So why'd you come here?

He just smiles, kind of sad.

Then the front window implodes and Rimney climbs through with a tire iron.

"It's going to happen now," Giff says.

And it does. It takes two swings. It doesn't hurt, really, but it's scary, because it's happening to me, me, me, me, the good boy in school, the boy who felt lilacs were his special flower, the boy who, when poor Jean was going, used to sneak off to cry in the closet.

As I go, there's an explosion of what I can only call truth/energy flood. I can't exactly convey it, because you're still in that living/limited state, so lucky/unlucky, capable of smelling rain, rubbing palm against palm, having some new recently met someone suddenly brighten upon seeing you.

Rimney staggers to the door, unbolts it, stands looking out.

I pass through him and see that even now all his thoughts are of Val, desperate loving frightened thoughts of how best to keep her safe.

Giff and I cross the yard hand in hand, although like fifteen feet apart. Where are we going? I have no idea. But we're going there fast, so fast we're basically skimming along Trowman Street, getting simultaneously bigger/lighter, and then we're flying, over Kmart/Costco Plaza, over the width of Wand Lake, over the entire hilly area north of town.

Below us now is Giff's house: snow on the roof, all the lights on, pond behind it, moon in the pond.

Giff says/thinks, Will you?

And I say/think, I will.

She's at the table doing bills, red-eyed, the note at her feet, on the floor. She sees me and drops her pen. Am I naked, am I pale, is my hair blowing? Yes and yes and yes. I put one bare foot on the note.

A lie, I say. Elliot's dead, sends his love. Rimney did it. Rimney. Say it.

Rimney, she says.

That's all the chance I get. The thing that keeps us flying sucks me out of the house. But as I go I see her face.

Rejoining Giff on high I show him her face. He is glad, and now can go.

We both can go.

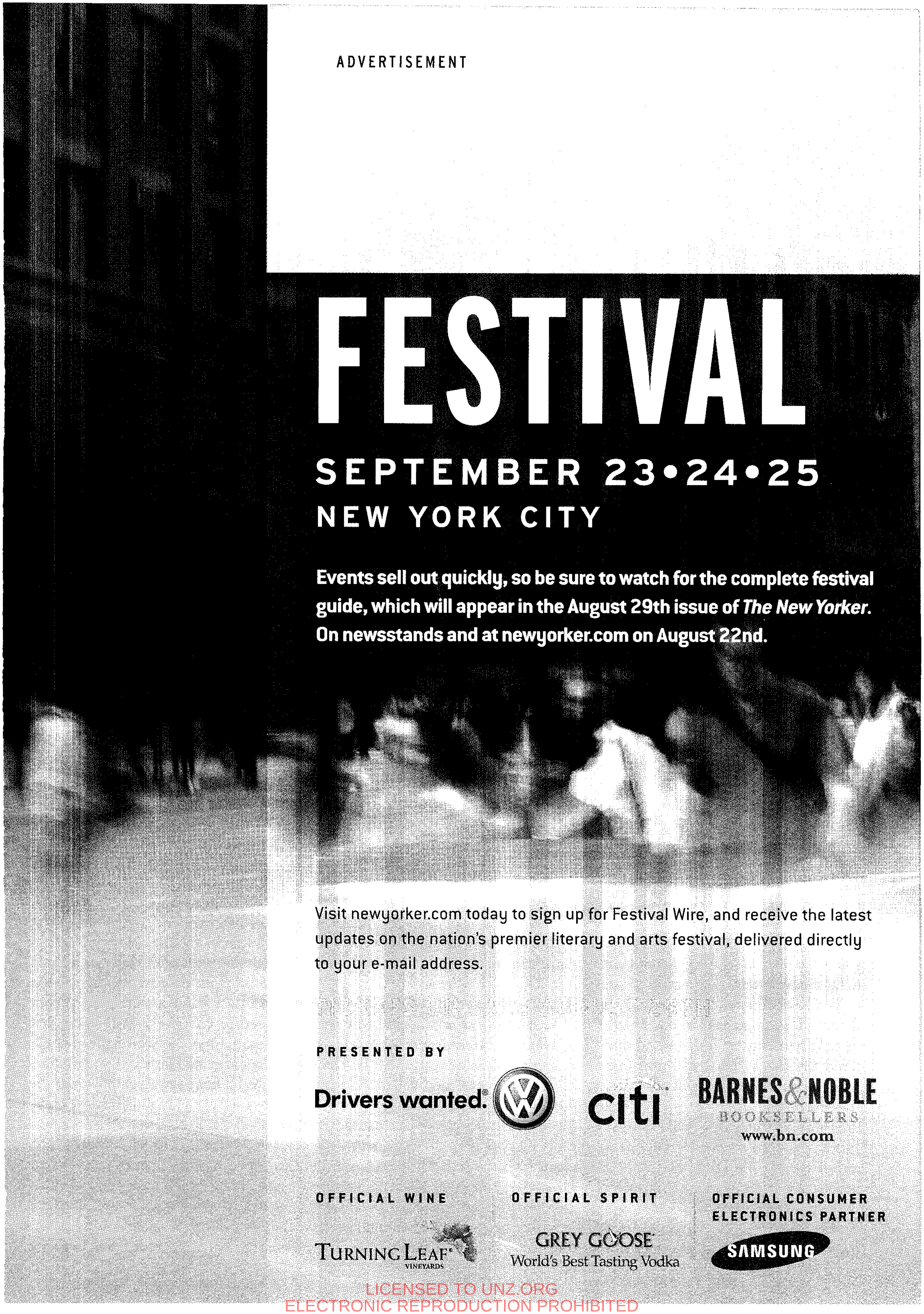
We go.

Snow passes through us, gulls pass through us. Tens of towns, hundreds of towns stream by below, and we hear their prayers, grievances, their million signals of loss. Secret doubts shoot up like tracers, we sample them as we fly through: a woman with a too-big nose, a man who hasn't closed a sale in months, a kid who's worn the same stained shirt three days straight, two sisters worried about a third who keeps saying she wants to die. All this time we grow in size, in love, the distinction between Giff and me diminishing, and my last thought before we join something I can only describe as Nothing-Is-Excluded is, Giff, Giff, please explain, what made you come back for me?

He doesn't have to speak, I just know, his math emanating from inside me now: Not coming back, he would only have saved himself. Coming back, he saved Mom, Dad, me. Going to see Cyndi, I saved him.

And, in this way, more were freed.

That is why I came back. I was wrong in life, limited, shrank everything down to my size, and yet, in the end, there was something light-craving within me, which sent me back, and saved me. ♦



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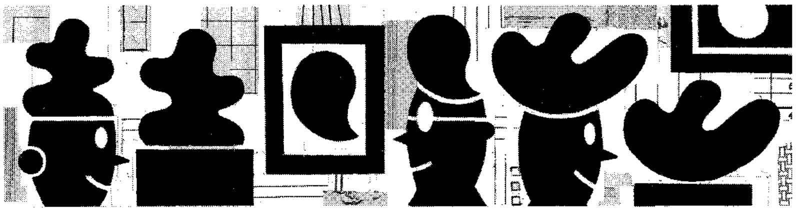


BOOKS

WRITER, INTERRUPTED

The resurrection of Henry Roth.

BY JONATHAN ROSEN

In 1993, I went to visit Henry Roth, a man as famous for his decades of silence as for the great novel he had published almost sixty years earlier, "Call It Sleep." Roth was living in Albuquerque, in a converted funeral home (by then everything about him was symbolic), but his mind was bound by the geography of his childhood—Brownsville, the Lower East Side, Harlem. He was an eighty-seven-year-old man still fuelled by childhood dreams and traumas, powering around the house on a rolling walker, cursing and singing and explaining. At one point during my stay, Roth asked me to drive him to the doctor. "At least you'll be making yourself useful," he observed. He was in an expansive mood during the drive; when we stopped at a traffic light, he suddenly declaimed, "Keep up your bright swords for the dew will rust them." His voice had the crooning humor of a highbrow vaudevillian. But then I missed an exit and Roth's mood grew suddenly dark. "When you make one wrong turn," he said ruefully, "the errors tend to compound."

But Roth, despite his own dramatic detour, did not remain in outer darkness. When I visited him, he had shattered the block that had imprisoned him and was on the verge of publishing the first installment of a vast, multivolume work, "Mercy of a Rude Stream." His hands were warped by rheumatoid arthritis; the very touch of his computer keyboard was excruciating. But he still put in five hours a day, helped by Percocet, beer, a ferocious will, and the ministrations of several young assistants. Roth would not die like a pomegranate, with all his seeds inside.

The reasons for Roth's monumental block—which include but are not limited to Communism, Jewish self-loathing, incest, and depression—are ultimately as mysterious as the reasons for his art and are in some ways inseparable from them. In a new biography, "Redemption" (Norton; $25.95), Steven G. Kellman does an excellent job of exploring Roth's creative life, its grim cessation and its miraculous rebirth. The biography's title is perfect, not simply because Roth found in his fallow years an ultimate source of inspiration but because his life made sense to him only when seen in a religious light, as a story of sin and repentance, exile and return. "Righteousness, righteousness shalt thou pursue," Roth declared the first day I met him, quoting Deuteronomy as a kind of commentary on his entire life. In his own eccentric pursuit of it, he made one of the most haunting journeys in American literature.

Roth was born in 1906 in the Galician town of Tysmenitz, now part of Ukraine. His father, Chaim, left for America that same year, and little Herschel, as he was then called, and his mother followed in 1907. Chaim was the ne'er-do-well son of the manager of a distillery. Like Albert Schearl, the character based on Roth's father in "Call It Sleep"—a man who torments his wife and beats his son mercilessly—Chaim seems to have poisoned everything he touched with his bad luck and wrathful temperament. His wife had married him only under family pressure, after disgracing herself by falling in love with a Gentile.

The family spent two years in Brooklyn and then moved to the Lower East Side, in those days the most densely populated piece of land on earth and later the setting of Roth's novel. In "Call It Sleep," there are safe, sensual moments when young David Schearl is home alone with his mama in their walkup apartment, but below is the cellar, the home of rats, darkness, and forbidden sexuality. How this buried region seeps into the upstairs world is part of the drama of the novel. David is led into a clothes closet by a girl with a leg brace and a style of speaking memorably captured in the shackled lilt of Roth's phonetically rendered urban dialect:

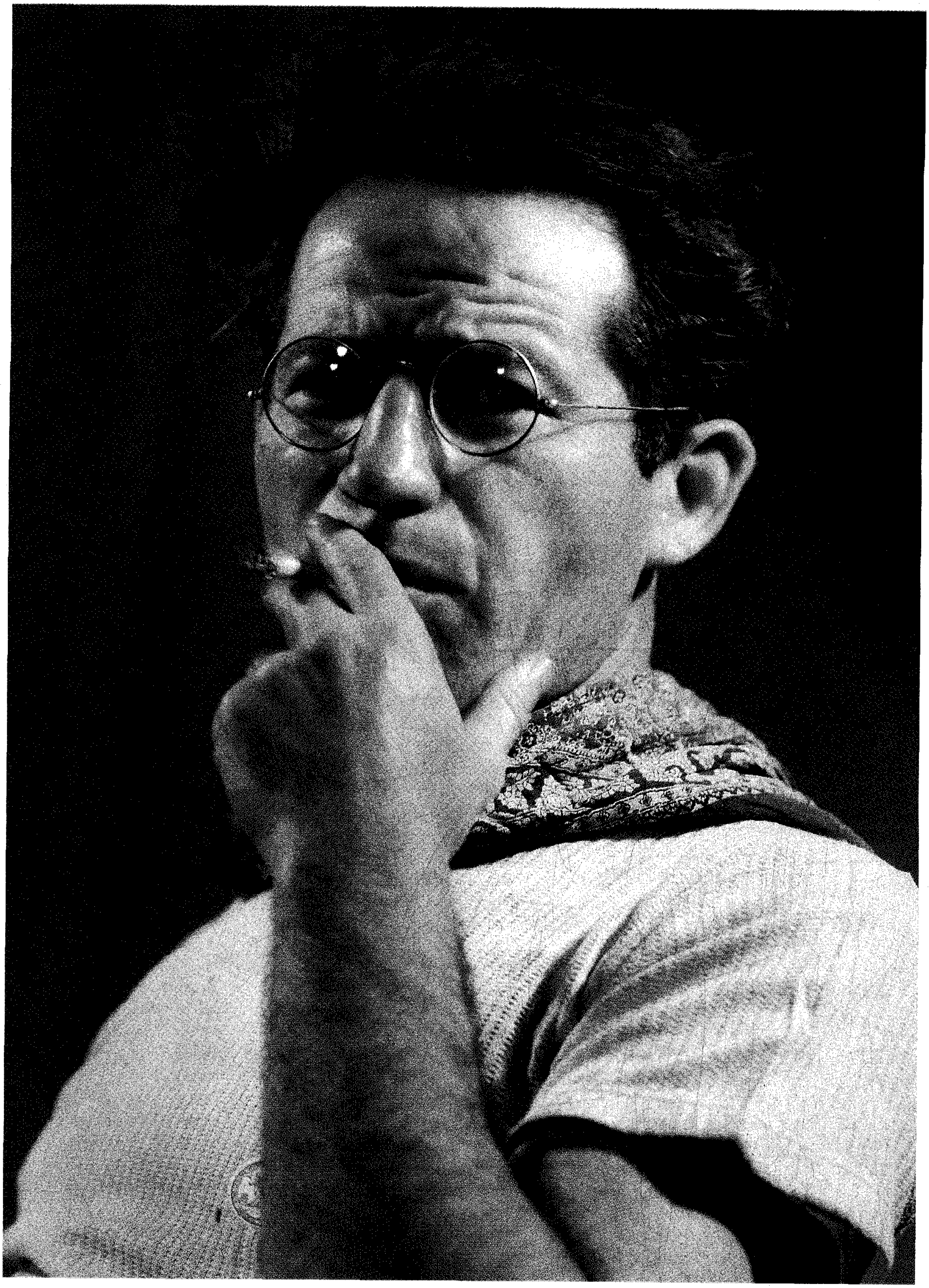
> "Yuh know w'ea babies comm from?"
> "N-no."
> "From de knish."
> "—*Knish*?"
> "Between de legs. Who puts id in is de poppa. De poppa's god de petzel. Yaw de poppa." She giggled stealthily and took his hand. He could feel her guiding it under her dress, then through a pocket-like flap. Her skin under his palm. Revolted, he drew back.

Nothing quite obliterates sentimental associations with the Lower East Side like the transformation of "knish" into slang for female genitalia. At times, the novel can seem like "Lord of the Flies" played out among the Dead End Kids:

> One glance at their tough, hostile faces, smirched by the grime and rust of the junk heap and screwed up into malicious watchfullness was enough. David's eyes darted about for an opening. There was none except back to the dock.

Roth came to despise this representation of his childhood, which he felt was a falsification. In interviews and, later, in the autobiographical "Mercy of a Rude Stream," Roth depicted his life on the Lower East Side as an idyllic time, spent in a secure, cohesive Jewish world that fell apart when he was eight and the family moved to Harlem. Though Harlem had a large Jewish population, the Roths lived in a substantially Irish neighborhood. As Roth later saw it, this was where he learned to hate himself as a Jew, believing the frequent taunts that Jews cared only about money, and envying the Irish toughs who teased and beat him. His Jewish religious education was interrupted, his sense of belonging to a

COURTESY HUGH ROTH



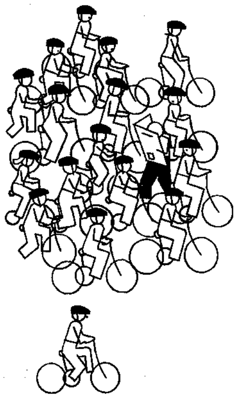
The sources of Roth's writer's block were ultimately as complex as those of his creativity—and perhaps inseparable from them.

people thwarted. It was, he said, the most traumatic dislocation of his life.

Roth’s characterization of his Harlem exile as a kind of hell makes more sense when considered alongside the revelation that it was there that he began an incestuous relationship with his sister, Rose. According to Kellman, Roth had been “groping” his sister since he was twelve and she was ten; by the time Roth was sixteen he was having intercourse with her. When he was eighteen, he also seduced his fourteen-year-old first cousin Sylvia, leading her into the basement at a bris.

Nearly seventy years later, when I interviewed him, Roth had not yet gone public with his secret, only with the hint that there was a secret. But it was clear from the vehemence with which he spoke of “the louse I was, who I detested” that he viewed his youthful self as evil. Kellman sees the incest as “a dramatic manifestation of immigrant insecurity, the newcomers’ inability to invest their emotions in anything beyond the reassuring confines of the clan.” Incest does function in Roth’s later work as an emblem of ingrown, immigrant misery, but the guilt that Roth felt hung over him like a kind of Biblical curse.

When he was nineteen, Roth was saved from Harlem and its miseries by a petite, Protestant professor of English literature, Eda Lou Walton, who was twelve years Roth’s senior. Born in New Mexico, she had a Ph.D. from Berkeley, where she had studied anthropology and English. She had studied poetry with Witter Bynner and translated Navajo verse. Walton had recently moved to New York to teach at New York University, where she became the teacher—and lover—of Roth’s boyhood friend Lester Winter. Roth, who was attending City College, would travel downtown after his own classes to join them and the many writers and would-be writers who gathered in Walton’s apartment in the Village.



Walton saw genius in the awkward, self-conscious Roth. He began visiting her without Winter, and a platonic intensity developed between them. She shared with him the complex details of her bohemian romantic life, and he eventually confessed his incest to her, presumably finding, in her unjudging, anthropological curiosity, a kind of temporary absolution. But most of all she encouraged his literary dreams. Walton introduced him to the work of T. S. Eliot and James Joyce, lending him a copy of “Ulysses,” still banned in the United States, that she had smuggled back from Paris. From Joyce, Roth learned that the rough ghetto world he had grown up in was fit material for high art.

Gradually, Roth replaced his friend—who didn’t appreciate Eliot and went on to become a dentist—in Walton’s affections. “She took me under her wing and into her bed,” Roth told me, though the bed remained crowded—even Walton’s friend Margaret Mead, no prude, referred to Walton’s promiscuity as “desperate.” On weekends, Roth was ousted to make room for David Mandel, a labor lawyer from New Jersey, whom Walton eventually married. Roth already had enough sexual shame in the bank to live off the interest for the rest of his life, but, despite this new layer of humiliation—compounded by financial support that he received from her—Roth’s time with Walton was essential for the production of “Call It Sleep.”

The novel, which remains one of the masterpieces of American literature, is dedicated to Walton and was written in blue books from N.Y.U. that she provided. Roth spent four years writing “Call It Sleep,” but it has the quality of a book composed in a kind of dream. The world seems sculpted out of light and shadow, and all the elements of this Manichaean universe are equally perilous. The cellar door that terrifies David “bulged with darkness.” Outside, there is “light so massive stout brick walls could scarcely breast it when it leaned upon them; light that seemed to shiver windows with a single beam.” There is a rhapsodic musicality to the novel, a Joycean flow of words, but there is also ominous tension on almost every page. The air, the emotions, the accents are all thick, throwing off violent sparks, like the great burst of electrical energy from the trolley tracks that knocks the young hero into unconsciousness at the book’s end.

No doubt this tension—a harbinger, in some sense, of his future block—derives from the agony Roth felt in writing an autobiographical novel that concealed the most traumatic fact of his own autobiography. (The novel’s manuscript was actually typed by his sister, Rose.) Furthermore, Roth was writing about Jews, although, as he later put it, “all he asked of a book was not to remind him too much that he was a Jew.” And surely there are sociological explanations for this sense of irreconcilable forces colliding in the world of the novel. By the early thirties, when Roth was writing the book, America had shut its doors to immigrants, and nativism and anti-Semitism were on the rise. Roth draws much of this outer opposition into the Jewish world he depicts, making it seem a world turned violently against itself. A rabbi tells his students, “Let me hear you wink and I’ll tear you not into shreds but into shreds of shreds!”

It is fascinating to read “Call It Sleep” in the light of Roth’s later insistence that he imposed on his Lower East Side childhood the disruptions of his Harlem life. He also claimed that he had made David a pathetic victim when in fact he was a villain—a notion that makes sense only if David is guilty of Roth’s own sins and in some sense deserving of his father’s terrible blows. A key element of the plot of “Call It Sleep” is David’s willingness to act as pander for a bullying street kid named Leo intent on “playin’ bad” with David’s cousin Esther. The tryst, David’s receipt of a rosary as payment, and the savage beating that ensues all reverberate with dark, confessional overtones once the reader knows that Roth seduced his own cousin.

It would be a shame if “Call It Sleep” were now mistaken for an encrypted cry for exculpation, just as it is a shame that the book has often been mistaken for a mere immigrant novel—an important one, to be sure, but limited to the plight of newcomers struggling in a strange land. The book is many things, but at root it is a religious work, and much of its enduring power comes from the way Roth harnesses the Biblical to the contemporary. The third of the book’s four sections is called “The Coal,” a reference to a passage from Isaiah, which young David hears, describing the purifying touch of divine fire on the lips of the prophet. David is obsessed with discovering this spark in his own life, and mistakes the electricity pulsing under the trolley tracks for a manifestation of God's power. The fact that it knocks him out only enhances the uncanny force of the association—David is like the hapless figure in the Book of Samuel who puts his hand out to steady the Ark and is struck dead on the spot.

Roth's novel sold fewer than two thousand copies when it was published, in 1934, but it was hailed in many reviews, if primarily in sociological terms, and Kellman, who notes that at the time one in four households was on relief, does an admirable job of documenting the critical response. The *Herald Tribune* called the novel "the most accurate and profound study of an American slum childhood that has yet appeared." The *Times* claimed that Roth had "done for the East Side what James T. Farrell is doing for the Chicago Irish." But Roth, already attracted to Communism, was stung by the criticism of *The New Masses*, a Communist publication, which faulted the novel for the very artistry that makes it great: "It is a pity that so many young writers drawn from the proletariat can make no better use of their working-class experience."

The fragile sense of himself that Roth had managed to sustain while writing "Call It Sleep" was breaking down. Though Roth was a genuine working-class kid from a real slum, he was, in his own eyes, a degenerate—the kept man of an effete bourgeoise. Communism was for Roth (as it was, ironically, for many Jews) in part a rebuke to anti-Semitic notions about Jews and money. Having absorbed these ideas, Roth took the criticism of *The New Masses* personally. The financial and sexual humiliations of living with Walton had begun to outweigh her ability to erase his earlier shame.

Roth's quest to "be a man," of which Communism formed a part, was lifelong. When I met him—after he had been a boxer, a tool grinder, a ditchdigger, a hospital attendant, a slaughterer of waterfowl—he still spoke in an almost childlike way about the need to learn to fend for himself. He was mourning the death of his wife of half a century, Muriel Parker, and he told me that, though he had been deeply devoted to her, her death was a kind of "gift," because it forced him, in his mid-eighties, to take care of himself for the first time, to balance his checkbook, to pay his own taxes.

Roth joined the Party in 1934, disregarding Walton's warning that it would ruin his fiction, and set about writing a "proletarian" novel about an illiterate Communist organizer he knew, a charismatic former criminal who had lost a hand in a factory accident and seemed to Roth to be everything he himself was not. In some sense, Roth was like D. H. Lawrence, who suffered under a rough working-class father, demonized in "Sons and Lovers" but also turned into a touchstone of masculine authenticity. Roth later speculated that he had been defeated by his proletarian novel because he found himself increasingly attracted to the real-life model for the book; he considered homosexuality a "degeneration" into which he was in danger of falling. But, as with everything about Roth, there were multiple reasons. All of them fed the grim paradox of his block: he needed to flee the man he was in order to survive, but his art and, in some sense, his ultimate survival depended on his coming to terms with that abandoned self.

David Mandel, the man who frequently displaced Roth in Walton's bed, and who helped get "Call It Sleep" published, persuaded Maxwell Perkins—the editor of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas Wolfe—to publish Roth's new novel, but Roth burned the manuscript before that could happen. He had been beaten up trying to organize dockworkers that day, and decided that he was a phony proletarian just as he'd been a phony artist. Mandel and Walton found him bruised and bloody, singing the "Internationale," with the remains of the novel smoldering in the fireplace.

Roth did not move out of Walton's apartment until 1938, but he was already moving away from her. During a stint at the writers' colony Yaddo (arranged by Walton), Roth met Muriel Parker, a promising pianist and composer who had been a pupil of Nadia Boulanger's, in Paris. Roth later claimed that Muriel saved his life—by the time he met her, he had lost his will to live. She was, like Walton, a Wasp from another world, and she became utterly devoted to Roth, ultimately renouncing her own artistic

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life and following him into poverty and obscurity.

The Roth mythology suggests that, having turned his back on writing, he immediately buried himself alive in menial work and rural Maine. But he made a stab at success and stability—driving to Hollywood in an ill-fated attempt to sell "Call It Sleep" to the movies and secure a screenwriting contract. Back in New York, he worked as a substitute high-school teacher and later trained as a precision-tool grinder, work that was deemed essential by the government and got him out of active service in the Second World War. Moving to Providence and then Boston, he worked in places with names like the Federal Products Company that capture perfectly the anonymity into which he was fading.

When Roth and Parker tired of urban squalor, they made the move to rural Maine. There, though he never wholly abandoned the dream of writing, and even sold two stories to *The New Yorker*, Roth descended into deepening silence. He burned his notebooks, fearing that they contained evidence of his continuing Communism. He gave away most of his books, and spent many nights sitting up late solving complicated math problems to keep his mind alive without the burden of introspection.

But while Roth was burrowing into Maine, killing geese for a living, raising two sons, and battling bouts of deep depression, his book was making its own strange journey. Never entirely forgotten, it began to turn up on lists of important neglected novels, championed by critics like Alfred Kazin. The writer and editor Harold Ribalow even tracked Roth down and got his permission for a reissue of "Call It Sleep," which came out, in a small hardcover edition, in 1960. But everything changed when, in 1964, Peter Mayer, then a young editor at Avon, brought it out in paperback—he had learned about the book from a cabdriver—and Irving Howe gave it a glowing review on the cover of the *Times Book Review*. "Call It Sleep" became an instant best-seller and went looking for its lost master.

Roth grumbled about his newfound fame, but he was glad for the money and for the sense, once again, that he was a writer. He and his wife learned Spanish and travelled to Mexico and Spain, part of a dream that Roth had to write a play or novel about the Spanish Inquisition. The work was to have centered on a crypto-Jew, a *converso* who has secretly kept his faith. A single, superb short story, "The Surveyor," which *The New Yorker* published in 1966, was all that came out of those grand plans, but Roth had begun to discover that he was the *converso* and perhaps had kept the faith after all.

The next turning point in Roth's creative and emotional life, after the rediscovery of "Call It Sleep," was the Six-Day War. Suddenly, Roth saw Jews as fighters who were as tough as the Irish kids he had known in Harlem. And he saw the Soviet Union, which he had once idealized, allied with Arabs bent on annihilating the Jewish state. Roth, who was starting to come to terms with his painful personal history, also began to embrace Jewish history and his own place in it, and to feel that the two were intertwined.

Roth later said that Joyce had been a pernicious influence on him, because Stephen Dedalus, and Joyce himself, wanted to fly past the nets of "nationality, language, religion." Roth had tried to do the same, but he came to realize that it was only by flying into history, into peoplehood and particularity, that he could truly be free. He began studying Hebrew, and his modern political affiliation merged with an ancient Biblical one. He dated the destruction of his writer's block to 1967, though he did not in fact begin writing his second novel until 1979.

That final work was an autobiographical epic, "Mercy of a Rude Stream," which appeared in four volumes in the nineteen-nineties and has just been reissued in paperback by Picador. The title comes from Shakespeare, and its initials, Roth liked to point out, spell *mors*, the Latin word for death. Intending it to be, in part, a confession, Roth first considered publishing it only posthumously, but he consented to begin publication after the death of his wife, in 1990. (The third and fourth volumes were published posthumously—Roth died in 1995—and there remains a batch of manuscripts that were to form the final volumes of what was projected to be a six-part work.)

The novel follows the contours of Roth's life, beginning just after the main character, named Ira Stigman, moves to Harlem from the Lower East Side, and ending with his decision to get out of Harlem and move in with a character based on Eda Lou Walton. The immigrant family, with its casual hysteria and implosive anxiety, is still a powerful force in the novel, but its members are more modulated, less monochromatic, than the family in "Call It Sleep." The father is similarly prone to fits of violent rage, but he is a small man, easily cowed, who at one point tells Ira that he wanted to be a fiddler and play at weddings. Ira's mother is less monumental but more complex than the martyred Yiddishe mama of "Call It Sleep." Every time she mentions God, she mutters "if there is a God," and she stands up to her husband when he rails:

> "Say that again and I'll fling something at your head!"
>
> "Fling," Mom challenged. "A novelty."

In "Call It Sleep," the father was the engine of violence and cruelty, but here Ira's own desires are at the center. The novel's dark heart is Ira's incest with his sister, and Ira is the most pitilessly portrayed character. As he sits at the Shabbat table half-listening to his mother's laments—"Who could help but surrender to that contralto richness of feeling in which everything she uttered was steeped?"—he thinks of his sister: "ravening to get her every chance he had, and even though her dating had made her off limits for several years now, he desired her nonetheless."

But Ira is not simply the young protagonist of the book; he is also its author—an old man very like Roth, intermittently addressing his computer, who is called Ecclesias. The name is a perfect fusion of the Joycean and the Biblical: Leopold Bloom lived on Eccles Street; Roth, having turned his back on Joyce, is now, he seems to be saying, at home in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Occasionally, the computer speaks back, and these exchanges—printed in a different typeface—between the wry old man and his modern machine are among the many delights of the book.

"Mercy of a Rude Stream" is a strange, misshapen, wonderful novel about a young man falling apart as a person even as he is finding himself as an art-

BACH FUGUE

Frees the horses from their mechanical bolts,
Keeps the fire from spreading to the sleepers' floor.
The miming dancers in the wings (*swell to great*)
Begin their sly whisperings, their tired arms
Around each other's waists. The old woman spoons yellow cake
Into her (*celestial tremulous*) mouth. Capable of putting
Poor Gloucester's eyes, glistening, back. Catches the jumpers
With invisible nets from their sad, night bridges;
Finds all those who have been lost to you. The great
Chords, once struck, can never decay.

—*Emily Fragos*

---

ist. This dynamic is reversed in the sections where the old writer speaks aloud, to himself or to his computer, recalling the ways in which the artist fell apart but, in some measure through the love of his wife—referred to in the novel only as "M"—recovered his humanity and, eventually, an aspect of his art. Life being what it is, this last stage of artistic recovery is accompanied by the physical collapse of the reborn artist, whose health woes are chronicled with excruciating fidelity. (Roth is among the few novelists—one thinks of Saul Bellow in his last novel, "Ravelstein"—who have entered old age wearing a headlamp.) One of Roth's working titles for his epic was "Portrait of the Artist as an Old Fiasco," and the brutal, almost posthumous scrutiny he subjects himself to, along with his irony and humor, make the over-all work at once anti-sentimental and deeply moving.

The first volume has a sort of circling slowness that is likely to disappoint anyone expecting the explosive modernism of "Call It Sleep." Ira does not even have a sister in Volume I—she appears, magically, in the second volume, when Ira overcomes his ambivalence and his computer tells him that "the unspoken and unspeakable must become spoken and speakable, and the taboo broken and ignored." The work, heroically edited and shaped by Robert Weil—who did not read Volume II until Volume I was in print and regretted not having been able to merge the two—is full of cracks and seams, but somehow these become vital elements of the novel.

The old writer's musings offer a kind of commentary on the book as it is taking shape, questioning, among other things, the wisdom of Ira's confession of incest: "Why was he doing this, demeaning himself—and perhaps Jews, the multitude of Jews who had transformed one previous novel into a shrine, a child's shrine at that." And though it's clear that Roth felt he was liberating himself—the third volume is called "From Bondage"—the narrator also indulges dark, grandiose fears that his confession of sin will contribute to the destruction of the Jews:

> In other words, in the confusion and alarm in his soul, he feared he was laying a basis for a new Final Solution. Look at the scum these Jews are. Why should they not be annihilated? How else could he say it? It was in the old sense, in the Biblical sense, that they suffered—because they had sinned, because he had sinned. He had been guilty of abomination.

The analytical urge, however, can't obliterate the mimetic power of Roth's writing—his ear for dialogue, his detailed urban evocations, or the sensual fury with which he describes his incestuous trysts. "Mercy of a Rude Stream" lives at the border of fiction and memoir. It is radically postmodern in its disregard for formal structure, and yet it has an almost classical purity, harking back to the spiritual confessions out of which early English novels like "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "Robinson Crusoe" emerged. But the multiple voices in Roth's book, the sense that life is a dialogue, if not an argument, draws on another tradition altogether. Roth, who once observed that had he remained on the Lower East Side he might have become a rabbi, makes his second novel a commentary on the first. "Call It Sleep" functions almost like the Torah, an urtext from another age, while "Mercy of a Rude Stream" is like the Talmud, a series of commentaries and revisions that enforce the authority of that primal text even as they transform it. The fourth volume of "Mercy of a Rude Stream" actually takes a line from rabbinic literature as an epigraph: "Not thine the labour to complete, / And yet thou art not free to cease!"

Roth stands at the intersection of the American and the Jewish more fully than the more famous, and more assimilated, Jewish writers of a later generation. His themes—of flight and return, of mysterious election and abandonment, of the journey into a wilderness that yields a kind of redemption—are vital American themes as well as vital Jewish ones. Indeed, it is one of Roth's achievements to make the American novel seem like a subset of the Jewish one, just as America itself can seem a kind of commentary on the Bible.

Roth went forward artistically by going backward. The narrator of "Mercy of a Rude Stream" keeps bursting into story and then tearing the story apart with commentary. This rabbinic approach gave Roth a way out of the hermetic modernism that had oppressed him. Although ambivalent about the deceiving nature of fiction itself, he ultimately affirms its power. Arguing with himself, arguing with James Joyce, fretting about Israel, heaping praise on his computer and scorn on his body, he writes in the face of departing memory and approaching death with a vitality that exceeds that of much contemporary fiction.

It is not surprising to learn from Kellman that Philip Roth—whose own autobiography has a coda written by a fictional character—contemplated writing a novel about his namesake. What American writer wouldn't be tempted to tell a story that begins at the gates of Ellis Island and moves through the radicalizing hardships of the Great Depression, the psychic traumas of family abuse, the seductions of Communism, and the lure of the American West before arriving at the promise of regeneration through confession and atonement and acceptance of self? But Henry Roth lived long enough to become his own descendant, a ghost writer who came back from the dead to tell his story. ♦

BOOKS

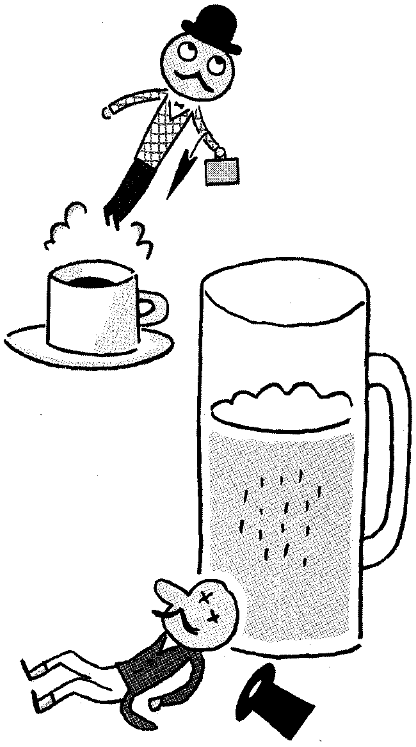
LIQUID ASSETS

The social life of beverages.

BY STEVEN SHAPIN

A typical day's drinking for Samuel Pepys in early Restoration London might go like this. At about ten o'clock, he would have his "morning draft"—usually "small" (or weak) beer, but sometimes regular beer or even wine. Cakes might be eaten with the draft, but dinner was the day's main meal, then taken at noon, and, at least on some occasions, this was washed down with wine—possibly watered, given the volumes that Pepys records knocking back. During the rest of the working day, more wine might be consumed: Rhenish wine (sometimes sugared); "sack" (sherry or Spanish white wine); claret (red Bordeaux); "Florence" wine; "burnt" or "mulled" wine; wine flavored with wormwood. He might also have further drafts of beer (traditionally hopped) or ale (traditionally unhopped, and specified as Margate, Lambeth, China, or Hull). Like most seventeenth-century Londoners, Pepys drank little or no water. Beer and ale were scarcely thought of as intoxicants; you would have had to drink vast quantities of small beer to become "foxed" or "fuddled," and, because the water available to Londoners was so foul, mildly alcoholic beverages were safer. Nor did dairy drinks seem to be a routine part of Pepys's life. He drank a dish of cream from time to time, but he believed that whey and buttermilk had purgative effects. On a trip across London with Navy Board colleagues, one of them had to rush "into the Devil tavern to shit, he having drunk whey and his belly wrought."

Tea and beverage chocolate are mentioned several times in Pepys's diary, both having been newly introduced in England. "I did send for a Cupp of Tee (a China drink) of which I never had drank before," Pepys wrote on September 25, 1660. And on April 24, 1661, he "waked in the morning with my head in a sad taking through the last night's drink, which I am very sorry for; so rose and went out with Mr. Creed to drink our morning draft, which he did give me in chocolate to settle my stomach." Throughout the period of Pepys's diary, both chocolate and tea retained their medicinal associations and neither became habitual. It was coffee that had pride of place. Pepys drank gallons of it, and with great regularity—though it might have been closer to nineteen-fifties dishwater diner coffee than it was to Starbucks espresso, given that a 1685 manual of directions for how to make the stuff specified "the third part of a spoonful for each person."



PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

And so you can tell quite a detailed story about Pepys's daily life through the beverages he consumed. The range of his drink testifies to the times he lived in: no European would have drunk coffee before the early seventeenth century, and there were no public premises for its consumption in England before the sixteen-fifties. The liquid part of Pepys's diet also says a lot about his status and position in society: coffee was cheap—a penny a dish—but a man who drank Château Haut-Brion (or, as Pepys called it, "Ho Bryan"), then as now, was not short of a shilling, and Pepys's attention to its flavor profile (it "hath a good and most particular taste that I never met with") revealed how hard he was trying to become a connoisseur.

We're all "drinking men," because we're all mainly squishy bags of water. (Men turn out to be squishier than women: male bodies average sixty to sixty-five per cent water, and women fifty to sixty per cent.) To live is to drink. We have to keep our water volume up—in temperate climates, a body typically loses about 2.5 liters of water a day—and it's well known that not drinking kills you faster than not eating. (Perhaps that's one reason fasting is a widespread political and religious gesture—it provides time to mobilize public sentiment—while the renunciation of drink is so rare that there is no English word for it.) But the organismic imperative tells us little about what drinking *means*. The vast difference between "Let's get a cup of coffee and talk about this" and "Would you like to come up for a cup of coffee?" has nothing to do with the physiological effects of the beverage.

The historical and social significance of what we drink is the subject of Tom Standage's "A History of the World in 6 Glasses" (Walker; $25), which seems to have grown out of an article on coffeehouses he did for *The Economist*, where he is the technology editor. The six glasses in the title allow Standage to tell a zippy narrative around the sequential appearance of various beverages: beer (discovered in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt); wine (possibly as old as beer but linked in Standage's story mainly with Greek and Roman antiquity); distilled spirits, especially rum and whiskey (distillation being a medieval Arab discovery, and rum allowing him to give an account of the American battle for independence); coffee (and the rise of the coffeehouse); tea (largely in relation to British imperialism); and, finally, Coke, which launches Standage into a fizzy celebration of globalization and American consumerism: "The nation that most strongly identified itself with the struggle for individual freedom was the United States, and its values have come to be inextricably associated with its national drink, Coca-Cola."

The links between freedom, democracy, and Coke may not be "inextricable"—I know of one or two freedom-loving Americans who can't stand the stuff—but Standage mostly avoids the ludicrousness of the "how chicken made the modern world" genre of pop history. What remains attractive about Standage's exercise is the way that he uses something mundane and everyday to tell vivid and accessible stories about the changing textures of human life. Many of these stories about the world-historical role of food and drink have been told before, and in greater detail—for example, by the historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch and the anthropologists Sidney W. Mintz and Alan Macfarlane—but not with Standage's populist panache. In each of his six chapters, Standage uses a "glass" of something or other to draw attention to the social, political, and economic relations in which it is embedded.

Take tea. In Pepys's London, you could get a cup of tea at some of the same public establishments that served coffee, but tea was far more expensive and, partly for that reason, far less popular. As the eighteenth century began, however, tea fell in price and took its place in new webs of sociability. It became the center of a largely domestic ritual, presided over by women, and was regarded, in both senses of the word, as a gentle beverage, then pronounced "tay," as in Alexander Pope's "Rape of the Lock": "Soft yielding minds to water glide away, / And sip, with Nymphs, their elemental tea." Its service offered vast opportunities for social distinction, depending on the vessels it was brewed in, the time it was taken, the comestibles with which it was consumed, who poured, whether milk was added before or after the pouring, the sorts of cups in which it was served, whether it was sweetened, and so on. Nor have the distinction-making possibilities of tea been diminished by its democratization in modern times. My English wife tells me who she is by taking Earl Grey very weak in Limoges, and I say something in reply by taking a working-class brand called Typhoo very strong in a mug decorated with the logo of a Scottish soccer club.

Tea stood somewhere near the center of Empire. While the Dutch had colonial tea (as well as coffee) plantations in Java, the British depended for their supply on trade with China, which was monopolized by the powerful East India Company. But all the tea in China had to be paid for in silver, and by the end of the eighteenth century the drain on the Exchequer was becoming intolerable. The solutions to this problem were ingenious and world-changing: first, the Brits produced opium in the Indian colonies, which could be surreptitiously traded to China for silver, which could then be exchanged for tea; second, they covertly secured Chinese expertise in the cultivation and manufacture of tea—not an easy matter—and produced it in British-controlled Assam. Follow the movement of tea, silver, and opium and you have traced some of the main sinews of Queen Victoria's imperium. The same kind of story links sugarcane, molasses, rum (distilled from molasses), beef, the slave trade, and the course of Empire in the Caribbean, West Africa, and the American colonies. Slaves were taken from Africa to work the cane fields of the Caribbean islands. Molasses was the residue of refining sugar. Bought from the islands in exchange for American meat, it was turned into rivers of rum in Boston distilleries; from there it could be shipped to Africa for the purchase of more slaves. British attempts to gain control of the American Colonial molasses trade were no less significant in the independence movement than the better-known tax on tea.

It was the drinking of coffee, though, that involved the most historically innovative forms of sociability, and Standage offers a brisk gallop through scholarly work on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century coffeehouse as an emerging public space. It was a man's world, but within the masculine sphere the coffeehouse was exceptional for its egalitarianism. Unlike the Jacobean or Restoration theatre—which also attracted all classes but which segregated them according to where they sat or stood—the London coffeehouse might seat aristocrat, merchant, and artisan at the same long table. You went to the coffeehouse to drink coffee, certainly, but mainly to talk, catch up on the news, do deals, cabal. One of the coffeehouses that Pepys favored was the meeting place of a quasi-republican group of politicians, and in 1675 the association of coffeehouses with political intrigue so unsettled the King that he tried—unsuccessfully, as it turned out—to ban them. You could also go to coffeehouses to listen to philosophical or scientific lectures. After meetings of the Royal Society of London, Fellows would adjourn to a coffeehouse for serious discourse, and it was a coffeehouse conversation that catalyzed the composition of Newton's "Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy." A 1677 broadside rhymed the intellectual significance of the coffeehouse: "So great a Universitie, I think there ne'er was any; In which you may a Scholar be, for spending of a Penny." So some of the claims made for the role of the coffeehouse in creating the modern world are justified. The coffeehouse provided an influential pattern for all sorts of other human practices—politics, the relations among classes, journalism, possibly the very idea of "public opinion," and the general shape of much modern business. (The English insurance industry as we know it was founded at Lloyd's coffeehouse.)

Making such claims for the social forms of the coffeehouse, however, is not the same thing as making them for coffee itself. "Western Europe began to emerge from an alcoholic haze that had lasted for centuries," Standage writes of the coffeehouse era. He describes coffee as "the great soberer" and thus "the ideal beverage for the Age of Reason," the "preferred drink of scientists, intellectuals, merchants, and clerks," the elixir they relied on for "waking them up in the morning." Here Standage is more provocative than persuasive. Coffee did not, as Pepys's example shows, *replace* alcoholic beverages, and the diarist was typical of his contemporaries in waking up not with coffee but with the traditional small beer or wine. On occasion, Pepys even records taking "strong water" (distilled spirits) as his morning draft. As his diary began, Pepys—the future president of the Royal Society—was probably in an "alcoholic haze" more frequently than he was in a caffeine fit. For scholars and bureaucrats who liked to work late into the night, and then expected a restful night's sleep, caffeine was contraindicated. Nor can coffee be credited with having reined in England's boozy ways, since London's Gin Craze of the seventeen-twenties to the seventeen-fifties was among history's epic binges and man-made medical disasters; a sign on one of thousands of gin shops boasted, "Drunk for a penny, dead drunk for tuppence, straw for nothing." Serious drinking, one social historian writes, remained a "male sacrament," and Dr. Johnson observed that "a man is never happy for the present, but when he is drunk."

When coffee was first introduced in Europe from the Arabian peninsula, its physiological effects were indeed reckoned to be profound, but while contemporaries recognized that it promoted wakefulness, they were at odds about what other effects it had on body and mind. In 1674, "The Womens Petition Against Coffee"—which Standage attributes to collective female authorship, but which looks to me much more like the work of a louche male court wit—inveighed against its detumescent effects: "Never did Men wear *greater Breeches*, or carry *less* in them of any *Mettle* whatsoever. . . . The Occasion of which Insufferable *Disaster* . . . we can Attribute to nothing more than the Excessive use of that Newfangled, Abominable, Heathenish Liquor called *COFFEE*." To which "The Mens Answer" insisted that coffee, in fact, promoted debauchery—"there being scarce a Coffee-Hut but affords a Tawdry Woman, a wonton Daughter, or a Buxome Maide, to accommodate Customers." Coffee, after all, "is the general Drink throughout Turky, and those *Eastern* Regions, and yet no part of the world can boast more able or eager performers, than those Circumcised Gentlemen."

Historically speaking, then, the contents of each glass is of secondary importance; what really matters is who is drinking with you and what is going on as you drink. Certainly, if you follow Pepys around his drinking day in London you can parse beverages according to the forms of sociability proper to each. The morning draft might be taken at home, or at some public establishment, but it was usually in the company of no more than one or two friends or business associates—a means of touching base before the day's main work commenced. Wine or ale might be consumed either domestically or commercially. Taverns or alehouses could specialize in their offerings, and many of them provided private rooms suitable for either business meetings or sexual assignations. (The restaurant was a late-eighteenth-century Parisian invention, and so, if you wanted, say, a "chine" of beef or a dish of anchovies to accompany your drink, you'd probably bring it along or have someone fetch it from a nearby cookhouse.) Serving, or being served, dinner was a grander thing. This was a domestic scene: on special occasions you wanted a full table, and, if the company merited it, and you could stand the expense, wine of good quality and generous quantity would be offered.

The taking of certain drinks could itself be society-making. The Greek symposium was, literally, a "drinking-together," and the watered wine was both such as loosened the tongue and allowed symposiasts to display self-control. Just as drinking opened up the possibility of intoxication, so it allowed for a show of moral discipline. Wine was the perfect drink for the Greeks: with proper management, you could position yourself at the golden mean between the Dionysian and the Apollonian. Plato's Symposium instructively ends with everyone except Socrates having gone home, fallen asleep, or gotten drunk: a true philosopher, it is implied, can hold his liquor. Drunkenness was traditionally not alcoholism—that's a fairly modern category—but was encompassed within the vice called gluttony, a moral rather than a medical problem. Social ties are, and always have been, signalled, sealed, and solemnized with a fermented or distilled drink. You don't just drink, you *drink to:* to life (*l'chaim*) and health (*santé*, *salud*, *prosit*, *na zdorovie*, *gezondheid*, *slainte*, *zum Wohl*), to the monarch ("Gentlemen, the Queen"), to absent friends (the Sunday toast in the Royal Navy), to general good humor, well-being, and luck (cheers, *noroc*), to the company here assembled ("Here's to us. And those like us. Damn few and they're all dead"). Bogart's "Here's looking at you, kid" to Ingrid Bergman is a vestige of the Scandinavian obligation to honor your drinking partner by catching his or her eyes over the rim of your glass—much nicer than *skøl*, a reference to the use of enemies' skulls as drinking vessels: "Heads up," so to speak, rather than "Bottoms up."

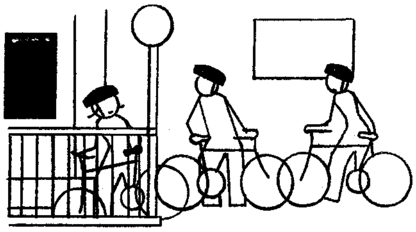
The "toast" originates in the toasted bread traditionally put into the drinking cup. But in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the same gesture—of drinking to someone and wishing him good things—was more commonly called a "pledge" or a "health," as in Ben Jonson's "Drink to me only with thine eyes, / And I will pledge with mine." Or, as Falstaff said to Silence (after hearing the chimes at midnight), "Health, and long life to you," to which Silence replied, "Fill the cup, and let it come, I'll pledge you a mile to th' bottom." And so drinking to someone was an element in the institutions of promising and of collective action. It was all good fellowship, but by the seventeenth century it had begun to get out of hand. In 1662, Pepys, who was then seriously considering giving up wine, noted that "Mrs. Shippman did fill the pye full of white wine, it holding at least a pint and a half, and did drink it off for a health to Sir William and my Lady, it being the greatest draft that ever I did see a woman drink in my life." He did not approve, nor did various far more Puritanical critics, who wanted to ban the whole institution of drinking healths. The thing, properly done, had to be taken in turns, and one health soon became twenty. Why damage your own health by wishing for someone else's? Was the practice just a cover for the desire to get "fuddled"? Or, as Groucho later put it, "I drink to your charm, your beauty, and your brains—which gives you a rough idea of how hard up I am for a drink."

It's nearly impossible to drink to someone with prune juice, iced tea, or Diet Dr Pepper. This has a lot to do with the accidents of how toasting developed, but it may also have something to do with the very notion of *spirits*. Alcohol was a fine and volatile substance—something classically reckoned to be neither wholly material nor wholly spiritual—but it also had the ability to take you out of yourself, in the same way that death was thought to release the human spirit from the body. Little wonder, then, that spirits were divine offerings, or that they were associated with the wish for long or eternal life. There's an epilogue to "6 Glasses," in which Standage speculates on the defining drink of the future. It turns out to be bottled water: it's safe and reliable (for the rich world, at least), it's widely thought to be better for you than tap water (though Standage doesn't believe that), and it's profitable (the ultimate triumph of Coca-Cola capitalism isn't Coke; it's the bottled water that the Coca-Cola Company has branded as Dasani). But water isn't a drink that you toast with; it doesn't make the heart glad; and it doesn't inspire. As Horace said, "No verse can give pleasure for long, nor last, that is written by water-drinkers." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

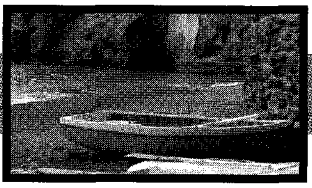
The Dreams, *by Naguib Mahfouz; translated from the Arabic by Raymond Stock (American University in Cairo; $19.95).* In his first book since an assassin nearly killed him, a decade ago, the Nobel laureate and author of "The Cairo Trilogy" transcribes his dreams. Presented without interpretation, the hundred and four sketches are cryptic, haunting, and brief—none more than a few paragraphs, some only a few sentences. Frequently, the narrator begins in delight and wonder—a street is a circus; a beautiful lady stirs his heart—and ends in terror, doubt, and confusion. He seems to experience everyday life with the knowledge that something is amiss—sometimes, perhaps, everything—and that people are, at the core, an uneasy mixture of idealism and hate.

Divided Kingdom, *by Rupert Thomson (Knopf; $24.95).* In this dystopian novel, the population of the United Kingdom has been divvied up into color-coded sectors determined by humor: the phlegmatic, the melancholic, the choleric, and the sanguine. Under this system, temperament trumps kinship—in a neat twist, the family unit is now considered responsible for "society's disintegration"—and separation is enforced by border guards and government informers. At first, Thomson's hero, Thomas Parry, seems content, as befits his sanguine designation. A rising star in the Red Quarter bureaucracy, he supervises the expulsion of unsatisfactory citizens to other regions. But when, on a rare visit to another quarter, he is issued a mysterious invitation to a night club, where he seems to return to his pre-division life, his faith in the absolute categorization of personality is shaken. Although Thomson's plotting is distinctly schematic—"Brave New World" is his obvious model—he succeeds in imparting a sense of urgency to his hero's search for identity.



Five Days in Philadelphia, *by Charles Peters (PublicAffairs; $26).* In June, 1940, in Philadelphia, a remarkable thing happened in American politics: Wendell Willkie, a forty-eight-year-old utility executive who had never held office, won the Republican nomination for President, defeating the isolationists Robert Taft and Thomas Dewey. Willkie was something of a liberal in a party that hated the New Deal—a true uniter in a time of enormous division—and he supported Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy. Peters lovingly brings to life the era just before America entered the Second World War—songs, movies, personalities, gossip—along with the intrigues and the six riotous ballots of the G.O.P. Convention itself. (In the convention hall, among others, were Herbert Hoover; the widow of President Benjamin Harrison; the young Gerald Ford, accompanied by a New York model; and fifteen-year-old Gore Vidal.) In Peters' view, Willkie's nomination was crucial; after Denmark, Norway, and France surrendered to the Nazis, Willkie helped F.D.R. rally American support for England.

The Pirate Coast, *by Richard Zacks (Hyperion; $25.95).* In 1805, with the United States at war with Tripoli, a disgraced diplomat named William Eaton embarked on the young nation's first covert mission: to track down Hamet Karamanli, the brother of the Bashaw of Tripoli, and place him on the throne. The quest was ill funded and poorly managed, and had a rather feeble ally in Hamet, who repeatedly attempted to back out of the plot. Eaton was further thwarted by Tobias Lear, the American consul in the Barbary Coast, who eventually negotiated a treaty (and paid a hefty tribute to ransom prisoners and insure peace). Zacks recounts the misadventures of Eaton (and the fledgling Marine Corps) with an enthusiastic flair that at times relies too heavily on romantic conjecture. Still, the narrative is propelled by the entertaining excesses of Eaton's rhetoric, as preserved in his diary and letters.



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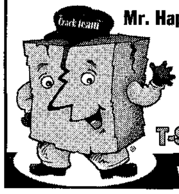

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POP MUSIC

BRAZILIAN WAX

Two top d.j.s get together.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

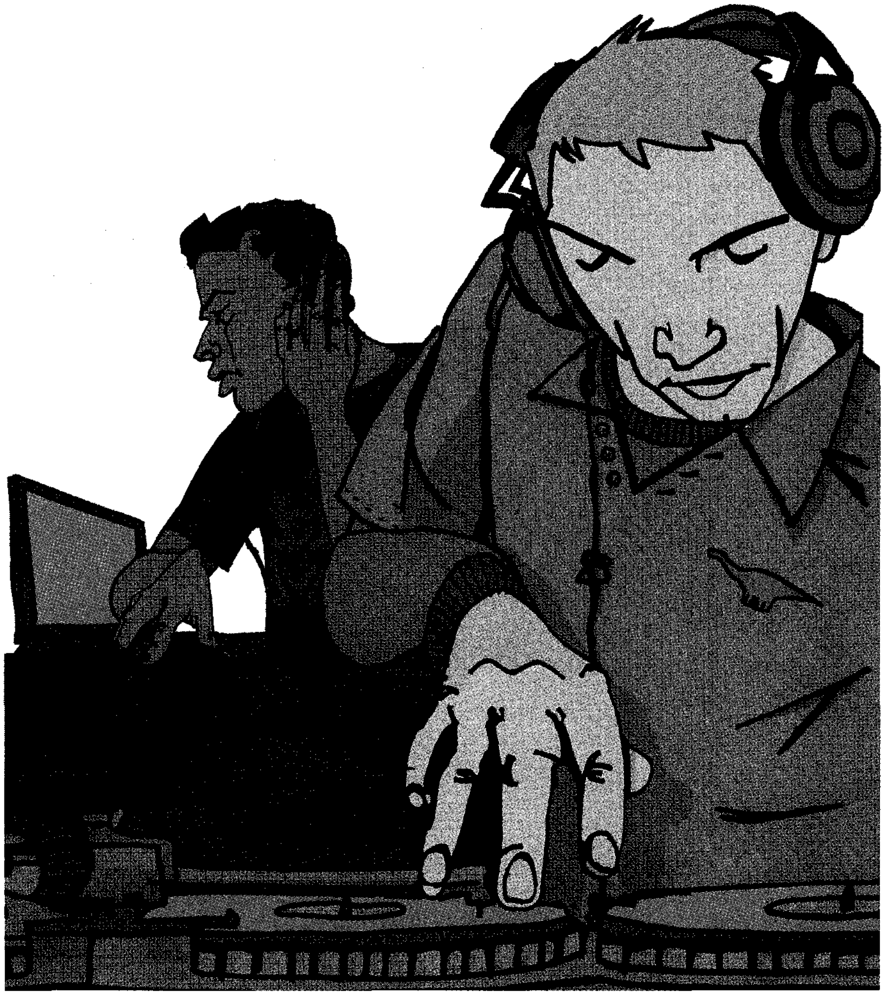
On a hot night in June, an unadvertised show by two influential d.j.s was getting under way at Rothko, a small club on the Lower East Side. Wesley Pentz, who is twenty-six and goes by the name Diplo—"Just like 'Delta' or 'Chevrolet,' it's a word I made up," he says, though it may have something to do with the line drawing of a diplodocus dinosaur tattooed on the inside of his right forearm—was playing first. Pentz looks a little like Paul Newman and moves in the permanently relaxed manner of someone who is used to having people pay attention to him. He wore a yellow Lacoste tennis shirt with a T-shirt underneath and shuffled between several turntables and a laptop filled with mp3 files.

As he played, Pentz waved to people he recognized from parties he has thrown in New York and Philadelphia with his friend the d.j. Low Budget, under the collective name Hollertronix. Since 2002, when the two began collaborating, Hollertronix's aesthetic has become the template for modish d.j.s all over the Northeast: bumping, grinding commercial hip-hop blended with unlikely samples from well-known pop songs. Pentz is a particularly talented *bricoleur*, who knows how to match non-American beats (Radiohead, Elephant Man) with big-selling American voices (Lil' Flip, Trina) and produce a sound that is unexpectedly fresh. When Interscope Records commissioned a remix of Gwen Stefani's "Hollaback Girl," which was the No. 1 single in the country for four weeks this spring, the company hired Pentz.

At Rothko, Pentz's d.j. partner was not Low Budget but Fernando Luis Mattos da Matta, a forty-two-year-old Brazilian who goes by the name Marlboro and to whom Pentz has become close, thanks to the latest in a dizzying series of cross-cultural musical appropriations that began nearly thirty years ago. In 1977, the steely, intentionally robotic German electronic group Kraftwerk released "Trans-Europe Express," a song that became a hit in black clubs in New York. In 1981, Kraftwerk released a song with an unusually heavy and thumping drum-machine beat called "Numbers," which became an even bigger hit on black radio. The following year, a group from the Bronx called Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force released "Planet Rock," a track that combined the music from "Trans-Europe Express" and "Numbers" with acrobatic ensemble rapping. "Planet Rock" moves at a hundred and twenty-eight beats a minute—a little quicker than your basic disco song—and its urgent sound inspired a genre in New York and London called "electro," and a genre in Miami called "bass," which is distinguished by lyrics that are exclusively sexual and occasionally pornographic. (The best-known Miami bass group is 2 Live Crew, which in 1990 went to court in Broward County, Florida, to defend its right to use obscenities in its songs.)

When "Planet Rock" and Miami bass records reached Rio, in the mid-nineteen-eighties, they spawned yet another genre, "funk"—also referred to as "baile funk" or "funk carioca"—which, confusingly, does not resemble American funk music but, rather, sounds like Miami bass fused with Brazilian singing and drumming. Da Matta is the godfather of the Brazilian funk scene, and he was standing behind Pentz at Rothko as Pentz cued up a strange song called "Bucky Done Gun"—the reason that the two now play shows together.

Pentz produced "Bucky Done Gun" for the British artist M.I.A.—it appears on her current album, "Arular"—and it consists in large part of chopped-up bits of a song called "Injeção," by the Brazilian singer Deise Tigrona, which was recorded in da Matta's studio. Both tracks incorporate a tiny sample of the horns from Bill Conti's "Gonna Fly Now," the theme from "Rocky," to create a stabbing, jittery effect that is both thrilling and irritating. Deise Tigrona raps in the ungainly four-bar style of nineteen-eighties hip-hop, haranguing you as though you'd broken her heart, and her body: "It is stinging but I can take it, scratching but I can take it. Ouch, doctor, what a pain, ouch, doctor, what a pain."



Marlboro and Diplo embody the borrowing and trading that is essential to pop music.

JASHAR AWAN

If Pentz is the impossibly cool kid two grades ahead of you, then da Matta is your most fun uncle, the one who never married and owns three cars. He is more than six feet tall and handsome, with a wide, easygoing face. At Rothko, he sang along to every song, wiggling his hips and pointing his fingers in the air, in a style that is outdated but somehow endearing. As he worked, images from a videotape of Brazilian favelas were projected onto the walls around him. He played "Pavaroti," a popular tune by Jack e Chocolate—which features someone imitating Luciano Pavarotti and sounds a bit like Elmer Fudd performing "The Barber of Seville"—and two tracks that sample James Brown. The songs percolated with an innocent sexuality, as though Marlboro were performing not at a night club but at a slumber party for teen-age girls, and as the tempo sank into the dancers' bodies everyone on the floor started moving in unison.

Baile funk strikes a balance that all good dance music strives to achieve: between the novel and the repetitious, which allows listeners to remain interested and moving. In Rio, the music is kept alive at weekly *bailes*, or dances, which take place in the favelas and, occasionally, at ritzy downtown clubs. Da Matta estimates that there are as many as five hundred *bailes* a week, and the ten or so that he d.j.s provide him with his main source of income. Though funk CDs exist in Brazil, recordings are not a priority for the musicians. The point is to go to the *bailes* and dance like mad.

As the hour inched past 2 A.M., Pentz took over, playing Missy's "Lose Control"—a track as close to baile funk as anything you'll hear on the radio now. Then, slowing the pace, he switched to Missy's other new song, "On & On," a darkly funky thing. He played it for a minute or so before mixing in Cypress Hill's "Hand on the Pump," a menacing hip-hop track from 1991, which samples Gene Chandler's 1962 doo-wop song "Duke of Earl." This was the move of a skilled d.j.: "Hand on the Pump" is not obscure, but neither is it fashionable now, yet it sounded perfect emerging from "On & On."

Pentz offered songs chosen neither to impress record collectors nor to please the peanut gallery, but which seemed connected in a deep, familial way. He played a foggy new song by Paul Wall called "Sittin' Sidewayz," a dazzling production by a newcomer from Austin named Salih Williams—the kind of person Pentz will know about before you do—which is built around a backward loop of Mexican guitar music. Finally, Pentz cued up his own remix of Gwen Stefani's "Hollaback Girl." The song was already great—sharp-edged and minimalist—but Pentz had made it better, embellishing it with cantering, syncopated drums to create a swinging dance track. Under Stefani's vocals, you could also hear snippets of baile funk—from "Feira de Acari," a festive track that happens to have been produced by da Matta.

When I talked to the d.j.s after the show, it became clear that though they come from different generations and cultures, both approach d.j.ing not as businessmen, or as celebrity seekers, but as ambassadors. They spoke repeatedly of the pleasures of "hooking people up" and of playing their favorite music for audiences that had never heard it. Pentz mentioned that Dave Kelly, a notable Jamaican dance-hall producer, was working on yet another remix of "Bucky Done Gun," which has now been remixed by da Matta himself, a turn of events that nicely illustrates the intricate connecting, borrowing, and trading that are the essence of popular music. Pentz and da Matta live for this process, the moments when they convert yet another dance floor, another listener, and each other. ♦

ON TELEVISION

THE YANKS ARE COMING

"Over There."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

Steven Bochco, the co-creator of "Over There," the new FX series about the war in Iraq, which begins on July 27th, has taken pains in interviews to declare that the show has nothing to do with politics. This is the first television series set in a war that is actually going on, and, in a promotional video, Bochco says, "My big concern initially was that I didn't want to do a show that, almost by definition, requires a political point of view." It isn't that he doesn't have opinions about the war, he says, but using them in his work makes him uncomfortable. "Over There," he says, is really no different from "Hill Street Blues," "NYPD Blue," or "L.A. Law"—three of the shows he has created, produced, and written for in his remarkable career. The idea for the show came from John Landgraf, who, when he approached Bochco, was the head of entertainment at FX; he is now the head of the network, and he has made the same claims about the show. It's unlikely that their attitude is based on fear for their professional lives; Bochco undoubtedly has a sultanic amount of walk-away money, and Landgraf must know that any possible fallout from the series—alienated advertisers, or a displeased Rupert Murdoch, the overseer of the Fox plantation—will be seen by much of Hollywood as a feather in his cap. Rather, they pose their claims as a creative choice, a way of getting at the truth of war as it is fought by the grunts, whose boots are on the ground, not by the generals or policymakers pushing pins in a map well behind the front lines. But it's something of a joke to think that you can in any way separate the war in Iraq from politics—there would *be* no boots on the ground, and no bodies under the ground, if it weren't for politics, and it is a mistake to imply that a political viewpoint is a narrow one, or, somehow, a less creative one. Not to mention that denying the impact of politics on a war story—on *this* war story—is itself a political act.

On the ground in Iraq: the first TV series set in real-war time.

Bochco and his co-creator, Chris Gerolmo (the writer of "Mississippi Burning"), who wrote five of the series' thirteen episodes, including the pilot, which he also directed, follow seven members of an Army unit who have just been posted to Iraq and the very loud, profane sergeant, nicknamed Sergeant Scream (played by Erik Palladino), who commands them. The series is somewhat in the style of "Band of Brothers," Stephen Ambrose's account of Second World War paratroopers as they went through special training, endured the miseries of D Day and the Battle of the Bulge, and went on to victory over Germany. But though there are two female soldiers in "Over There," the series is not simply a "Band of Brothers and Sisters." It is equally concerned with the toll the war takes on the soldiers' relationships back home, and with the conundrum that though all the characters in this army are volunteers, none of them appear to be where they are by choice. At the beginning of the pilot, we see them in their homes getting ready to report for duty, and one of them, a young man enjoying a last sexual romp with his wife (they have fun making the most of it, going through every room in the house except the baby's), is wearing a T-shirt with the Army slogan "Be All You Can Be." But, once they're in Iraq, the characters seem to be living out the dark side of the Army's marketing pitch "An Army of One," as each of them—lonely, far from home, scared to death—struggles alone to cope with his problems, both over there and over here.

The show isn't front-loaded with too many easy explanations for why the characters have enlisted, but it does make it clear that none of them really get what they bargained for. Bo Rider (Josh Henderson), the young man in the T-shirt, has a football scholarship, but it doesn't cover everything; he's counting on serving out his stint and then going to college on the G.I. Bill. Sergeant Scream, a career soldier, is nevertheless furious that his tour of duty has just been extended for ninety days—his replacement got sick—and that he has to train, and be endangered by, green recruits. Smoke, one of two black soldiers, is a stoner who hates white people; we don't have any clue why he joined up. One of the women, nicknamed Mrs. B (all the characters are known by nicknames except for Bo, a Texan, who is told that everyone already thinks that Bo is his nickname), is only eighteen, and appears never to have thought through the consequences of joining the Army: you can end up in a war. At the start, she's in a phone booth, desperately telling a friend that she's sure she's going to die. "I've seen those faces on

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

'Nightline,'" she says. "And I said, God damn, girl, that's me. Every one of them's me." The one character who, at least at the beginning of the show, will break viewers' hearts is Esmerelda Del Rio, known as Doublewide, who is talking to her baby before she leaves. Sitting with him at his high chair and feeding him, she tries to give him a sense of how far away she's going. The milk on his tray is where he'll be; the Jell-O is where Grandma is; and "Mommy's going to be way over there in the garbage." But she doesn't mean this as gallows humor—she's actually trying to reassure him, even though he's too young to understand anything. When she says to him, "I'll be back sometime next year," she speaks in the same tone she'd use if she were running a quick errand.

And then we, and the soldiers, are plunged right into fighting. They're on their bellies behind a berm, firing at a mosque in the distance. The fighting goes on all day and into the night, and it goes on some more, into the next day and the next night. The soldiers are pinned down; with their legs splayed in order to get as close to the ground as possible, they look like frogs in a dissecting tray. There's no cover around them, nowhere to hide, and viewers can feel this, too—a sense of loss of control and of danger everywhere. The sound of the bullets isn't loud; the *pock-pock* is disturbingly quiet. That's the thing: out there, life and death sound a lot alike. To make matters worse, an Al Jazeera reporter is in the mosque, covering the battle—and so the American generals behind the scenes are making their battlefield calculations in terms of public relations, not military strategy. The circumstances peculiar to this war—the technological innovations that allow the fighting to be shown in real time, and that enable the soldiers to send video e-mails to their loved ones back home—are duly noted in the pilot, usually with a twist. In one instance, the camera shows us a computer screen indicating that a message has come in, and then pans up to show us a woman—the soldier's wife—in bed with another man. The look of "Over There," too, is up to date; it's reminiscent of the TV coverage in the early days of the war, when the correspondents were playing with the military's toys, riding around in tanks and going ga-ga over night-vision goggles, and showing us several weeks' worth of acid-green and sandstorm-orange images. Many scenes re-create that time, two years ago, though the series is set smack in the present. At one point, an Iraqi prisoner angrily taunts the soldiers with the shame of Abu Ghraib: "Do you have a bag for my head? Do you want me to take my clothes off now?" There is even a bit of wit: when a soldier says, while making a video e-mail, that he's in "downtown Shitville," the woman monitoring the proceedings reminds him, in all seriousness, that he's not allowed to divulge his location.

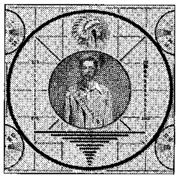
Every war movie or TV series that comes along seems to have to up the ante in terms of explicitness, to show us something about war that perhaps we didn't already know. In "Over There," the pilot alone offers a couple of shots of war's horrors that viewers are unlikely to forget, and they do remind us of the endless ways in which bodies and souls can be broken. They also remind us that, for the most part, we have actually been spared the gory details of this war. The series is especially good at illustrating one of the war's particular confusions: how to deal with suicide bombers, who are more than willing to die. Having a new recruit be an Arab-American is a little too neat and handy, however: explaining the appeal of jihad, he says, "It's like being a hippie in 1969 and then hearing about Woodstock. I mean, how could you not go, you know?" (Other things are a little too neat as well, such as the fate of the man who is naïve enough to wear that T-shirt saying "Be All You Can Be.") And there's the inevitable thinky college man, who sees himself becoming a monster, and kind of likes it—in this atmosphere, where all is confusion, monstrousness at least has the virtue of clarity. To judge by the first three episodes, "Over There" seems to be saying only, or mainly, that war is hell. There's an overall pointlessness to the show that's rather shocking, considering the outrageous lies and arrogance that got us into the war. But pointlessness may be inevitable in a country where, at the moment, to risk telling the truth—beyond the truth that soldiers die in war and things are tough on the home front, too—is to be condemned as unpatriotic. ♦

DEPARTMENT OF MIRACLES

Headline in the Marin (Calif.) Independent Journal.

BODY OF POPE MOVED; FAITHFUL APPLAUD

Michael Penn
Mr. Hollywood Jr., 1947



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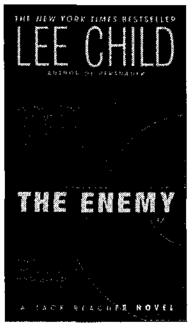

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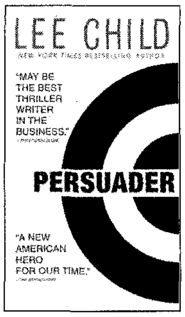
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THE THEATRE

THE NEW NOMADS

Ariane Mnouchkine turns asylum seekers into voyagers.

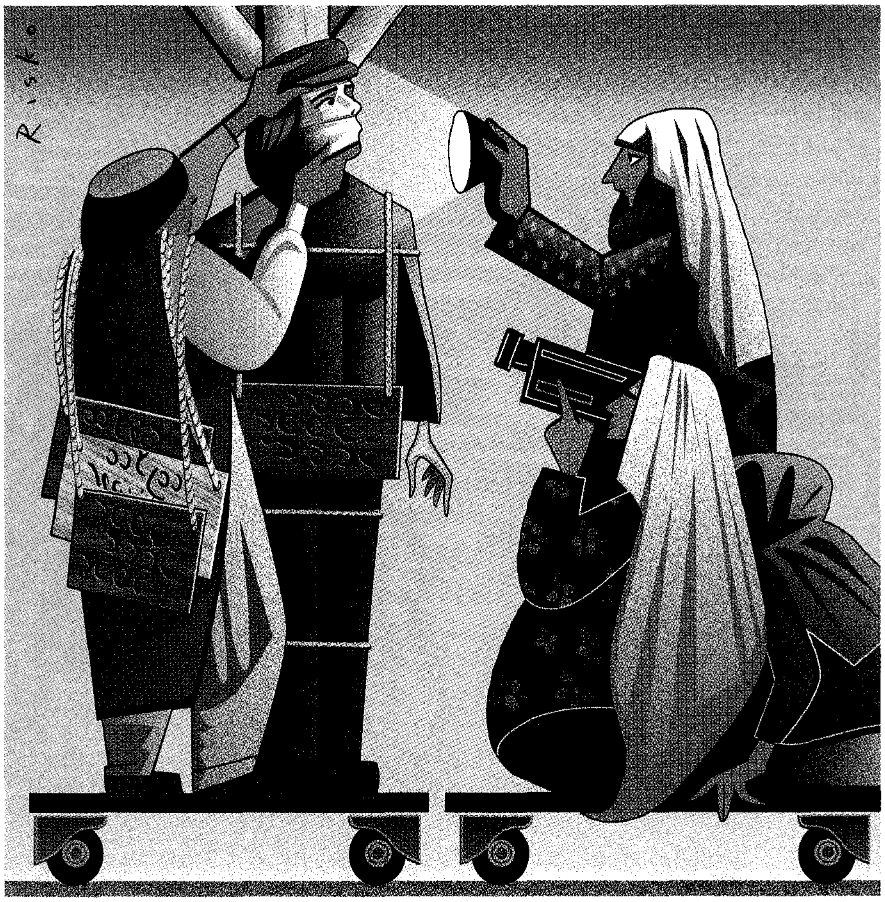
BY JOHN LAHR

In hide-and-seek, it's a tragedy if you are not found: this turns out to be the existential predicament of the refugees who populate Ariane Mnouchkine's pageant of the uprooted, "Le Dernier Caravansérail (Odyssées)." The saga, which has a Homeric sweep, is told in two parts and sixty-two scenes over six hours. (The Théâtre du Soleil's production runs at the Lincoln Center Festival until July 31st.) Set in notorious detention camps in France, Australia, New Zealand, and Indonesia, the story is played out by thirty-six actors onstage, and, around the world, by the twelve million people who are trapped in a ghost life of detention centers and legal rigmarole. As the irony of its title indicates—a *caravansérail*, which is based in part on a Persian word for "palace," is a spacious place where caravans put up—Mnouchkine's odyssey bears witness to the blighted new nomads who wander the world, looking for a landfall to call home.

Mnouchkine improvised the piece in six months from stories that she and two of her actors had collected from refugees between 1999 and 2002. "I hope the audience will follow our wanderings as we followed yours," Mnouchkine writes to one of her informants in the supertitle that opens Part 2. Wandering and unknowing are the experiences of the asylum seekers; they are also the tropes of this sprawling production. Through the caprice of history, these émigrés find themselves with no rights, no voice, no place. (Half of the world's refugees are under the age of eighteen, and, as Caroline Moorehead writes, in "Human Cargo," "almost five per cent of these are unaccompanied minors, travelling the world on their own." Another seven million refugees have been, according to the World Refugee Survey, "warehoused for ten years or more.") The narrative of their lives has been severed, a rupture whose loss includes their cultural idiom, what Eva Hoffman has called "the encoded memory of heritage." The refugees are disinherited; they are frozen in time. "We have no importance," one says. "That is our life." To the dispossessed, Mnouchkine's capacious spectacle is a big-hearted, always elegant, gesture of reclamation.

Mnouchkine's storytelling is more about presentation than about penetration. Here, the actors dress underneath the bleacher seats, so theatrical artifice is the first thing the audience encounters: instruments, musicians, props, the whole machinery of make-believe become a part of the spectacle. Mnouchkine speaks through line, space, sound, and superbly controlled images. Words for her are merely decoration on the design of movement. Her interest is in pattern, not psychology. (Most of the drama is in pantomime; the characters have only washes of personality.) It is not fact, which is the realm of journalism, but feelings, which is the realm of the theatre, that is the play's offering. "Le Dernier Caravansérail" is really a dramatic inquiry into desolation, a way of making the audience imagine an unmoored life. To this end, dollies, skillfully manipulated by the crew, transport the characters into view and out of sight. Like surreal figments in a dream, the refugees constantly scuttle across the vast expanse of the empty stage, propelled as if their feet never touched the ground. Glide replaces drift. The swift movement takes naturalism out of the narrative and gives the people and their stories a sort of mythic metabolism. The device also helps to engineer the nightmarish internal sense of hubbub and horror. At the same time, the spaces the refugees inhabit in the play—detention cabins, telephone booths, boat decks, hovels—are small, tight, claustrophobic, and mean. Most of the action takes place in a sort of Rubic's Cube that Mnouchkine has devised to give isolation angularity and insight: from almost every angle, the refugees are caged.

Elie Wiesel said, “Refugees live in a divided world between countries in which they cannot live, and countries which they may not enter.” This division is sensationally conjured in the first image of “Le Dernier Caravansérail,” in which refugees attempt to cross a roiling river between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, hoisted over the torrent in a wicker basket whose rope and pulley are operated by a smuggler. The wind roars and the refugees’ shouts are muffled; people rappel horizontally across the stage; they slip; they struggle. A woman hesitates, then lunges and almost slips into the water before she’s finally hauled into the bobbing basket. One man is swept away; upstage, he disappears in a swell, while downstage a drama about payment is acted out with the smuggler. With behemoth bolts of gray silk which are expertly whipped up by the crew, Mnouchkine creates the illusion of water. There is nothing new in the illusion—a hoary avant-garde device—but there’s everything new about how she deftly uses it to tell the story of the danger, the bravery, the desperation, and the gruelling physical and emotional cost of exodus. When the asylum seekers are safely on the other side, they trade insults with the smuggler: “Kyrgyz bastards! You race of dogs!” “Kazakh bastard! . . . Stop moving across my country.”



Mnouchkine based her work on refugee stories that she and her actors collected.

ROBERT RISKO

At the beginning of Part 2, the refugees are tempest-tossed again. But this time the waves are higher and the boat pitches toward us, propelled by an exile who sometimes steers the tiller with his foot, as whitecaps, signalled by white sheets amid the gray, roll over the boat. As it spins closer into view, we suddenly see heads crammed below the deck. Mnouchkine’s choreography of calamity is inspired. The pump stops; people are thrown into the water and cling to the boat. When, finally, the sound of helicopters is heard, and the refugees know rescue is at hand, airmen are winched down to shout over the din of propellers, “Go back where you came from! Australia will not accept you.”

The world of the play is full of cries and curses, but occasionally humor cuts through. A Kurd waiting to ride the rails from a camp in Sangatte, France, to London tells of his first trip there and meeting a policeman at the station. “He took me directly to Buckingham Palace! Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip in person. ‘Welcome Mr. Timur! Welcome to England! What do you want? A job? A car? A house?’” Inevitably, in such a large tapestry, there are many loose threads—some might say too many. The tales from Sangatte and the politics of the smugglers trying to cut through the wire fences to the Channel tunnel take up far too much time for the information they yield. But the best stories have a haunting mystery. An exiled Iraqi is quizzed in a conference call with a bored Australian inspector reviewing his claim for asylum. The scene, one of the only extended prose pieces, is a demonstration of the psychological and linguistic cross-purposes that make an immigration interview so daunting. “You want to drive me crazy? You want me to lie?” the Iraqi asks. In another scene, a black refugee does go crazy. Over the roar of jet engines, on an airport gangway, the man resists entering a plane. He brawls with two policemen. The punch-up, seen behind opaque plastic curtains, is furious; in the violent confusion, they seem to have killed him. One policeman, becoming hysterical, stands over the refugee and slaps him hard back to consciousness. The refugee disappears inside the plane. As a flight attendant tidies the gangway, a distressed child steps out onto it and her mother tries to coax her back.

Death comes suddenly in the camps. After a snafu on the tracks outside Sangatte, an old Russian woman tries to climb back into the camp and gets stuck on a chain-link fence. Below her, the smuggler who sent her into the Channel tunnel is knifed to death in a turf war. When she finally lowers herself down, she frisks his body for her money. Once she’s found her fee, she prays over him.

At the final curtain call, the cast members, instead of facing the audience, form two columns and face each other. At first, they keep a cautious distance, then they rush together to embrace. The embrace of the other, it seems to me, is the point. The telling of the refugees’ stories—their real names are projected in full on the scrim at the finale—and the listening to them is an act of civility and, in its own cunning way, also an act of antiterrorism. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

OPTING OUT

Three views of rebellion.

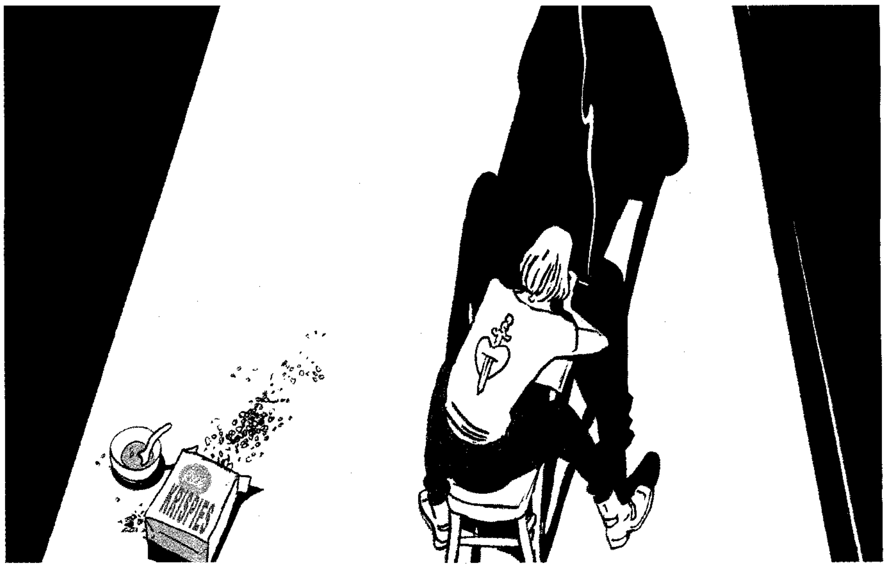
BY ANTHONY LANE

What do you do with a hero, or a heroine, who refuses the duties of the heroic? Given that movies rejoice in stardom, in the will of actors to besiege the screen, what happens when the characters whom they play want nothing more than to slide off the verges of the world? Thanks to the loose rhythms and low costs of independent cinema, we have met more slackers than we can handle; but a slacker is less vexing than a renegade, too hip to be a hobo, and stripped of genuine pith and attack by the charms of rebellion lite. Three new movies scorn the easy option, trying to revive our sympathy for those who take offense at modern life, or tune out from its demands.

The first attempt, "Last Days," comes from Gus Van Sant, who guides us through the final act of one man's existence. Blake (Michael Pitt) is the lead singer and guitarist of an unnamed rock band. He has long, cheesy strings of fair hair and a forthcoming tour on which he will never embark. His body is irredeemably silted up with drugs, there being no detox on earth that could flush out that level of tox. In the course of the film, he goes for a walk, eludes company, and finally dies from a bad case of being himself. Any resemblance to the late Kurt Cobain is entirely coincidental.

How can one defend this prolonged mumble of a motion picture? Well, some of the motion has a hypnotizing grace. As Van Sant proved in his previous movie, "Elephant" (2003), he refuses to go in fear of the long take. This sets him apart from many of his contemporaries, for whom every movie is a kind of slasher flick, sliced and diced within an inch of its life. By contrast, Van Sant is prepared to hang around and see how a scene unfolds. And so it is that we watch a man prepare a bowl of cereal. This noble ceremony is performed by Blake with a dreamy precision, as if he were a sleepwalker trying to split the atom. We stay with him until the payoff, which finds him carefully putting a box of Rice Krispies in the fridge.

This is endearing rather than lovable, and it shows the poise with which Michael Pitt—who appeared two years ago in "The Dreamers"—holds our attention while keeping our indulgence at bay. Although we see plenty of him, we seldom draw near, with full-length shots outnumbering closeups; how can we read this fellow's mind, when he has so clearly lost it along the way? Almost the whole movie takes place around a large, echoing house in the country, which seems less of a Nirvana hangout than the natural habitat of Miss Marple, and Blake duly spends his time dodging in and out of doors, fleeing the imprecations of friends. He picks up the telephone but says nothing to the voice on the other end. If icons are unreachable, the movie implies, that is not because they are wondrous but because something in the warping of their circumstances tugs them out of our grasp.



Michael Pitt plays the troubled leader of a rock band in Gus Van Sant's "Last Days."

ISTVAN BANYAI

All of which will be sacrilege to any Kurt Cobain groupies who line up for "Last Days" in search of either scandal or revelation. To be honest, none of them, nor anybody who smells like teen spirit, will have time for such a ruminative trip, and Van Sant's method will hold more appeal for those of us who smell like stewed tea. At best, Blake is a spaced-out cowboy, and the manner in which he squats by a fire and serenades the wooded darkness with a droning rendition of "Home on the Range" feels like the final, exhausted gasp of the frontier mentality. Van Sant's mainstream projects, like "Good Will Hunting," are not just squarer but more sentimental than his smaller films, and the most stubborn virtue of "Last Days" is its reluctance to gild its hero as a *poète maudit*. Instead, he lies somewhere between a lost boy and a total pain, and the movie honors that status by swinging from the quiet to the cacophonous. In one ravishing image, we see him pick up his guitar and plunge into crashing chords, whereupon the camera, far from drinking in the noise like a fan, retreats with a solemn dignity, until we find ourselves listening to Blake through the decorous window of the house. We might as well be overhearing him at prayer.

How you rate this movie will depend, finally, on whether you can stomach the death. This is not a matter of blood; we never witness the gunshot with which Blake, like Cobain, puts an end to his existence. What we do see is his soul, as naked as a baby, rise languidly from his broken body and clamber out of the frame. True, it travels upward rather than downward, but then Van Sant is hardly one of those fulminators who want rockers to go to Hell. Nor, on the other hand, is his film in the business of sanctification. It merely hints that some people, gifted or otherwise, may have had enough. Such, perhaps, is the most drastic choice available to the revolutionary: if you want to change the world, and it resists changing, then you might consider bidding it farewell.

The saddest hotheads of all are those who arrive after the party is over. In the case of "The Edukators," the new film from the Austrian director Hans Weingartner, they are late by three or four decades. The movie starts with Jule (Julia Jentsch) and some friends running amok in a Berlin shoe store. Their gripe is the sweatshop conditions of shoemakers: a worthy cause but, compared with the state-shaking vengeance of the Baader-Meinhof gang, no more than a blip of dismay. In a prosperous land, what remains for the young and furious?

The solution is what you might call décor terrorism—breaking into the homes of the rich, rearranging the contents, and leaving a note that reads "You have too much money," signed by "The Edukators." The plan is that, while the bourgeoisie can no longer be destroyed, its nerves can be plucked and snapped like wires. There is certainly a trill of suspense to be had from these ideological heists, but Weingartner's movie is never quite as keen-edged as it hopes or needs to be. Just imagine the political jitters that the German director Michael Haneke, who made "Funny Games" and "The Piano Teacher," could have mustered from so menacing a setup. Part of the problem is that the Edukators themselves—Jule, Jan (Daniel Brühl), and Peter (Stipe Erceg)—seem so helplessly unaggressive, with their youthful features, barely roughened by experience, and their milky minds. At one point, Peter flies to Barcelona for a break; if German society has made him free enough, and solvent enough, for such a spree, what exactly is his beef?

Then, suddenly, the movie sharpens up. A break-in goes awry, and our heroes find themselves in possession of a hostage. Hardenberg (Burghart Klaussner) is a paunchy businessman, who is not pleased to be kidnapped, yet you sense his furtive relish of a challenge; he is brighter than his captors, and it slowly transpires that, in his past, he was no less inflamed in his beliefs. By now, we are far from Berlin; Jan and the gang drive their prisoner high into the mountains, and the ensuing power play comes across as a bizarre, late-capitalist take on the enduring Germanic obsession with remote places, and with the wrestlings of spirit that they encourage. It's as if the altitude had put the characters into a trance. Weingartner throws in a final twist, slanting the film toward his revolutionaries, but I'm not convinced that they have won the game. The movie gives us ample, if inadvertent, proof of why it is that the Hardenbergs always end up ruling the world, and why the Jules and the Jans can never be more than licensed fools, capering bitterly around the throne.

And so, in desperation, to bed. That is where Lisa (Margo Stilley) and Matt (Kieran O'Brien) base themselves in Michael Winterbottom's "9 Songs," and where we watch them slake their lust. Much has been made of the detail of the proceedings, and, for anybody out there who doesn't have Internet access yet still craves the spectacle of ejaculation, here is your chance. There is a fine film to be made about the retreat from worldly obligation into erotic rite, and Brando and Bertolucci made it in 1972. But what "Last Tango in Paris" proved was that our skin-grazing view of a body makes us more, not less, enthusiastic to grasp the shape of the soul that it enshrines. Sex, in other words, is a surprising revelation of character, and when the characters in question, like those in "9 Songs," are drab to the point of inane, their lovemaking becomes as heated and gripping as blancmange.

This is an awkward stumble for Winterbottom, who made the wonderful "In This World" (2002), with its mix of spikiness and lament. His motive here—to investigate desire without a blink or a blush—is laudable, but the look of it suggests that he rushed the project through, leaving the script to founder at the level of a student film. Only one aspect of "9 Songs" was a shock to me, and that was the music. Matt and Lisa, in their brief inter-intercourse moments, stagger out to a selection of gigs, and we join them in the fray. Through a storm of bobbing heads, we watch Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Franz Ferdinand, and others—the cream of current bands, supposedly, although the uninitiated may wonder why most of the cream sounds like a cow giving birth in a wind tunnel. When neither rock nor movies can take us to where the wild things are, who will show us the way? ♦

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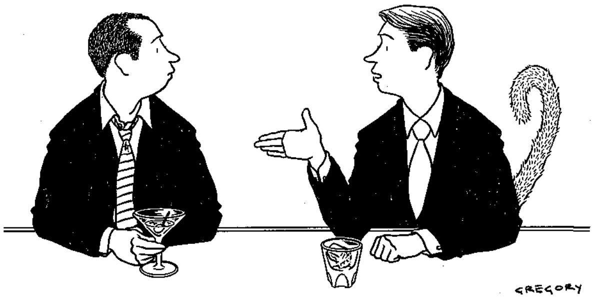
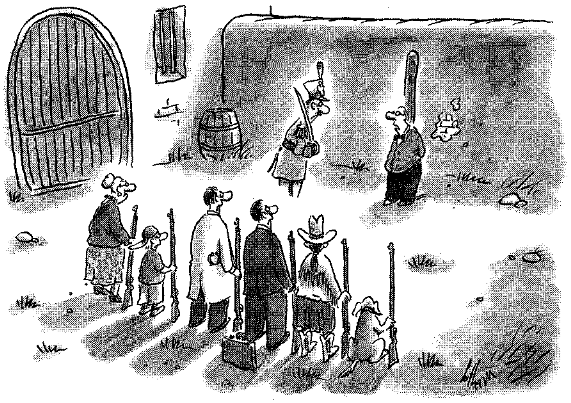
Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Michael Crawford, must be received by Sunday, July 31st. Finalists in the July 11th & 18th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 22nd issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Try telling that to the Kansas Board of Education."
Bob Schwartz, Cincinnati, Ohio



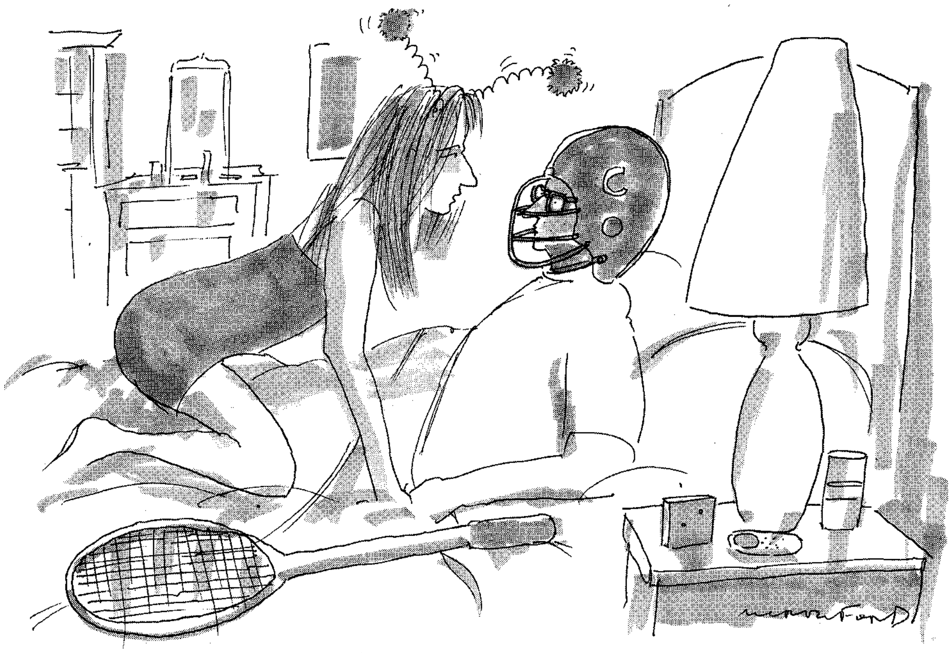
THE FINALISTS

"Gee, you guys really are having trouble meeting your recruitment quota."
Neal Bellet, Wayne, N.J.

"I guess my wife couldn't make it."
Lisa Goldberg, Silver Spring, Md.

"Frankly, your brochure is a bit misleading."
Richard Woodward, Clemson, S.C.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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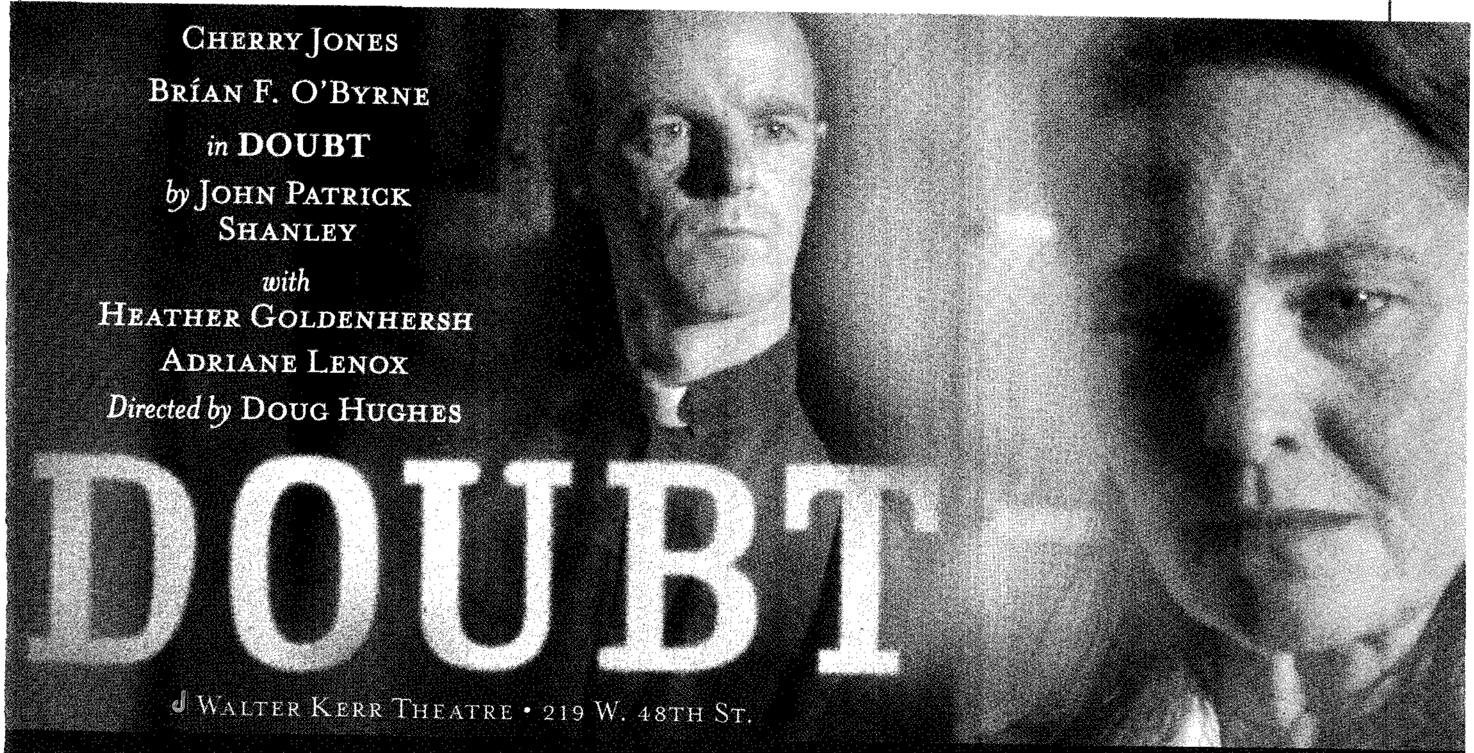

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BRÍAN F. O'BYRNE
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with
HEATHER GOLDENHERSH
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